AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Stephen E. Ambrose's two-volume biography *Eisenhower* was reviewed in the *TLS* on February 8.
Chris Baldick is the author of *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848–1932*, 1983.
Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and nineteenth-century fiction* was published in 1983.
Averil Cameron's *Procopius and the Sixth Century* has just been published.
Humphrey Carpenter is at work on a biography of Ezra Pound.
Anne Chisholm's biography *Nancy Cunard* was published in 1980.
Hennig Cohen is Professor of English and History at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
Margaret FitzHerbert is the author of *The Man who was Greenmantle: A biography of Aubrey Herbert*, 1983.
Leonard Forster is Schröder Professor of German Emeritus at the University of Cambridge.
Peter Gay's *Freud for Historians* will be published later this year.
Anthony Howard is Deputy Editor of the *Observer*.
Lady Jeans, the organist and musicologist, studied under Franz Schmidt.
Desmond S. King is lecturer in Politics at the University of Edinburgh.
Roger Lockyer is the author of *Buckingham: The life and political career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592–1628*, 1981.
Peter Mackridge is lecturer in Modern Greek at the University of Oxford.
Peter Marshall is Professor of American History at the University of Manchester.
Denis Matthews's books include *Beethoven Piano Sonatas*, 1967.
Michael Meyer's biography of August Strindberg will be published this summer.
Kenneth O. Morgan's *Labour in Power, 1945–1951* was published last year.
Anthony Pagden is the author of *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, 1982.
Arnold Rampersad is currently completing a biography of Langston Hughes.
Peter Redgrove's *The Man Named East and Other New Poems* was published earlier this year.
Barry Stroud is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley.
Paul Thompson is Reader in Social History at the University of Essex.
Tzvetan Todorov's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The dialogical principle* appeared in English translation earlier this year.
Hugh Trevor-Roper's *Renaissance Essays* will be published next month.
A. N. Wilson's account of religious experience, *How Can We Know?*, was published earlier this year.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ON

The TLS *of June 16, 1910, carried a review of W. A. Hirst's* Argentina, *from which these extracts are taken:*

The output of books upon Latin America has in recent years been very large, a proof doubtless of the increasing interest that is felt in the subject. . . . According to Mr Hirst "the era of modern Argentina is inaugurated by the presidency of Sarmiento in 1868." This does not imply that from 1868 onwards Argentina became free from revolutionary disturbances . . . . Not, indeed, until the presidency of General Roca, 1898–1904, and the settlement by that strong and prudent statesman of the long-pending boundary dispute with Chile, did Argentina's material prosperity begin to make that extraordinary advance which has been one of the marvels of the last decade. Those who are interested in Argentina and its future as a field for investment, for trade, or for immigration will find in Mr Hirst's book a very interesting and trustworthy survey of the present condition and prospects of the country. The productive powers of its soil are almost unlimited, and its magnificent waterways and the network of railways which are traversing the vast plains in every direction, by making transport easy, are enabling the profitable pastoral and agricultural development of the country to go forward by leaps and bounds. . . only this year the tunnel has been completed linking the Argentine with the Chilian railway system, and ... ing out direct traffic between Buenos A... and Valparaiso. This great work has been ... carried out by an English firm, since it is al... entirely to English enterprise and En... capital that the Argentine railways owe ... existence. . . .

Mr Hirst in his comments upon the poli... condition of the country. . . fails to bring b... fore the English reader the actual state ... things. Government in recent years, und... succession of capable, honest, and intellig... Presidents, has been on the whole stable, pro... ressive, and eager to promote the indust... and agricultural development of the count... But Argentina does not differ from the oth... States of Latin America in being a Republi... little more than name. The Government is ... the hands of a small minority of the cultu... class, to whom politics are the only occupati... and the obtaining a political post the one ai... life. . . . Only a small portion of the elect... take the trouble to vote at all, since the issu... a foregone conclusion, the ballot-boxes be... frequently tampered with and the returns ... the votes cast therefore purely fictitious. T... truth is that the vast mass of the people ... nothing whatever about politics, and the ... ie in possession of the reins of power can ... be ousted by a rival group through a revo... tion. . . .

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Guessing at the future

Peter Clarke

T.E.B. HOWARTH
Prospect and Reality: Great Britain 1945–1955
256pp. Collins. £14.95.
0 00 216281 4
ALEC CAIRNCROSS
Years of Recovery: British economic policy 1945–51
527pp. Methuen. £35.
0 416 37920 6

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was ostensibly the age of wisdom, it was arguably the age of foolishness, it was certainly the epoch of belief, it was undeniably the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was – old men will tell you – the spring of hope, it was – others will asseverate – the winter of despair. Much like our own times? Maybe. Yet the conflicting passions which illuminated British political life in the years after 1945 still burn strongly and even in retrospect refuse to die down into a sombre appraisal.

Rather like the bridegroom in the old gag, who thought that he was offered a choice between better or worse and richer or poorer, T.E.B. Howarth has opted pretty consistently for worst of times: for foolishness, incredulity, Darkness and despair. His is an account of how Attlee's Labour Government, infused with vain hopes of building a socialist commonwealth, was checked in its stride by the realities of the post-war world, and gave way in due course to the consensual Conservatism of the early 1950s. Such a story has been told often before in celebration of the expansionary consensus, as articulated by R. A. Butler in 1954: "Why should we not aim to double our standard of living in the next twenty-five years and still have our money as valuable then as now?" Howarth promptly comments: "That neither of these aspirations was to be realized was a consequence of the largely bi-partisan system of economic management described by *The Economist* as Butskellism."

In short, here is a pithy popular narrative of Britain's post-war decline from the Thatcherite perspective of the 1980s. It casts a jaundiced eye over the frailties of Britain's performance. In 1949, for example, "there were suddenly far fewer exports, since Arthur Deakin's Communists were busy in the docks and the nationalized railwaymen were also on strike". Despite the miraculous turn-around in the balance of payments under the Conservatives, things looked hardly more satisfactory by 1955 when, we are told, an MP "informed the nation that he had been watching employees of the London Electricity Board for a week from his window in Dartford, during which time they did practically no work at all". This is cited to illustrate "the peculiarities of full employment" – rather less full than it might have been, perhaps, among the legislating class. The Tories, no less than Labour, are arraigned for neglecting the Smilesian virtues. "It would take twenty years and a Chicago economist, together with the party's most improbable political leader since Disraeli, to re-establish the truth that there is nothing free in the world of goods and services."

Whereas Howarth has given us a tract, Sir Alec Cairncross has given us a treatise. His title, *Years of Recovery*, suggests a different tone, and the scope and scholarship of the work give its conclusions formidable weight. The author served as Economic Adviser to the Board of Trade during part of this period and his familiarity with the official documents thus stretches back in some cases to their very generation. But this is not simply a memoir, however valuable that might have been: it is an exercise in historical retrieval, piecing together the story from contemporary records and, where pertinent, subsequent published authorities.

Cairncross draws attention at the outset to the problem of "the shifting sands of statistical revision". It was in this period that the Central Statistical Office began publishing the wide range of figures about national income and expenditure, and about Britain's external payments, which have since become more sophisticated not only as indicators but as tools of economic management. It is not just that the methods of producing current figures have improved over the years: past figures have been subjected to successive revisions. In some respects this has virtually turned the story upside down, especially on the balance of payments in the early post-war years, in ways that make preconceived verdicts look jejune. Thus Howarth writes: "Britain had been living on tick since the war – £380 million in 1946; £675 million in 1947 and another £250 million in the first half of 1948." Had he relied instead upon the revised figures published in 1981, he would have found deficits of only £230 million in 1946 and £381 million in 1947, with a small surplus by 1948.

Further implications arise from the way the statistics have been revised. The first is a counsel of scepticism – once bitten, twice shy. As Cairncross delicately remarks, "it is a little more difficult to accord to the latest figures the simple trust that we gave to their predecessors". This is certainly a salutary caution, especially for those economic historians who have regarded quantitative data as possessing a privileged degree of certainty. A second point is that contemporaries were working from information which we now believe to be incorrect but which they accepted as their premiss for policy-making. And a further question crops up when these difficulties are fused together. Did variations in the available estimates engender such uncertainty that confidence in forward planning was impaired?

In fact the frailties of the statistics bulk larger in retrospect than they did at the time. In general the economic forecasts on which the government leant seemed serviceable. For example, the briefing for the Washington loan negotiations in 1945 forecast an increase in national income by 1948 of 11 per cent above the 1939 figure – almost exactly what C.H. Feinstein's authoritative research subsequently estimated. Keynes scored a rather different kind of bulls-eye with his guess about the balance of payments. After some preliminary adjustments, he forecast a cumulative deficit for 1946–8 of £1,250 million. The aggregate of the first published estimates turned out to be £1,245 million. "At the time", Cairncross points out, "it seemed as if the balance-of-payments forecasts accepted as the basis of policy in 1945 had proved remarkably accurate." Only later did an anomaly emerge.

Guessing the future was in certain respects easier than guessing the immediate past. Thus for the crucial year of 1947 the *Economic Survey*, published in February, projected a deficit of £350 million and, as we now believe, it turned out to be £381 million. The discrepancy here was with the figure of £675 million, as first announced at the time. In one sense, the revised figure falls into place as less aberrant. Yet it also poses a quite different problem of explanation when set alongside the indubitable fact of a gold and dollar outflow of £1,024 million. When the overall current account deficit was put at £675 million, this picture hung together. Once this deficit is reduced to £381 million, there is a problem, to which we must return later, in explaining where all those dollars went.

No account of these years would ring true without a good deal of persistent fretting over the dollar gap. It is a matter on which Cairncross has furrowed his brow for longer than most, and he worries away at this theme in several of his most compelling chapters. The problem arose from the strikingly different impact of the Second World War upon the British and American economies. It had immensely enriched America, both absolutely and relatively. For the United States war was the continuation of the New Deal by other means – and more effective means at that. For Britain, by contrast, it was not just a question of ceding priority to America but of facing unwonted impoverishment. In a memorable metaphor, which the years devalued through indiscriminate reiteration, Keynes called it "a financial Dunkirk".

In the First World War Britain had to liquidate overseas assets to the tune of 15 per cent of her wealth, and in the Second there was a loss of 28 per cent. The cushion of foreign investments, which had served to render the long-term decline of British productive industry tolerably comfortable, had now disappeared. Everything therefore hinged on exports. But British exports had been run into the ground as part of the war effort. The Americans had obligingly shared the strain by taking over Britain's economic commitments while Britain mobilized manpower for military ends. As Attlee put it in 1945, "The very fact that this was the right division of effort between ourselves and our allies leaves us, however, far worse off, when the sources of assistance dry up, than it leaves those who have been affording us the assistance." Within days of VJ Day, President Truman ended Lend Lease, leaving Britian with a very large army, a very small export trade, and nothing in the kitty.

Cairncross brings out the salient features of the general position with deadly effect, before turning to his real concern, which is the formulation of the policy response. He makes it clear that there was little real alternative to seeking a loan from the United States. Doing without it postulated not only "a swift withdrawal from military and political obligations to other countries and an acceptance of a much humbler role in international affairs" but also "a degree of austerity exceeding anything experienced in wartime".

The option of simply relinquishing Great Power status looks more feasible and attractive in hindsight than it did at the time. It is easy enough now to see that Britain was ultimately weakened by her post-imperial pretensions; but these were defended after 1945 with the same bloody-minded stubbornness which had

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been vindicated in 1940. Keynes himself was to point out in February 1946 that "it comes out in the wash that the American loan is primarily required to meet the political and military expenditure overseas". This argument for cuts in defence spending, however, coming from the architect of the Loan strategy, does not, of course, support the conclusion that no Loan was needed.

Again, as regards austerity, it seems that rationing helped maintain the whole population upon an adequate diet, albeit one lacking in choice and variety. But that does not indicate the capacity of the British people to subsist on an even more exiguous ration. As it was, there was the making of a cultural if not a nutritional crisis in 1949, when the ascetic Cripps, the prophet of wholemeal bread and a higher extraction rate, confronted the flatulent Bevin, an authentic tribune of working-class attachment to white bread.

Given that a loan was necessary, it was only to be had on the Americans' terms. Those who supposed otherwise, like Emanuel Shinwell, with his view of British trade as "essential to US prosperity", are swiftly deflated with a parenthesis: "(this at a time when the US was suffering from excess demand and when Britain's imports from the US represented about 0.5 per cent of American GNP)". Cairncross concedes that Keynes got off on the wrong foot by introducing the concept of Justice when he should have been haggling over how to hire the money, but defends his subsequent conduct of the negotiations. The scheme of repayment, after all, was not onerous, as Britain's ease in meeting it from the early 1950s was to demonstrate. The immediate problem, however, centred on the pledge to make sterling convertible on a fixed timetable.

The convertibility crisis of 1947 was in this sense a planned crisis. The British had never been confident that convertibility could be achieved so soon but they found reasons for hoping for the best. Keynes's calculation – or miscalculation, as it turned out – was that the dollar drain would end once the balance of payments was back in equilibrium. Hence the size of loan needed was governed by the accumulated deficit which he forecast for 1946–8, namely £1,250 million or $5,000 million (three-quarters from the United States, one quarter from Canada). In fact, as we have seen, the deficit was less than half this amount, and the current account was back in balance by 1948. The almighty snag was that the dollar drain continued until 1952, producing a peak deficit of $9,500 million. Herein lay the peculiar problems of the period.

Cairncross is at his most lucid and persuasive in explaining how this came about. He shows that the world economy had become lop-sided, divided between hard currencies which had done very well out of the war and soft currencies which had not. It was in the latter areas that Britain found her major export markets, with receipts in non-convertible currencies. Her imports, on the other hand, came largely from countries which required payments in gold or dollars. Britain's deficit with America was of long standing and had never been a problem so long as it could be settled multilaterally. What was new was the way British exports to the sterling area were now left "unrequited". A surplus here could not provide the wherewithal to finance dollar imports.

This was the impasse which Britain faced in 1947. Her imports from America ran at such a high level because there were virtually no alternative suppliers at that time for goods which were regarded as essential. Admittedly there were two items on the import bill which consort uneasily with the image of Crippsian austerity – films and tobacco. But the lifeline to Hollywood had to be maintained unless the major form of mass entertainment was simply to be shut down. Cigarette smoking, likewise, was not only a quintessential cultural symbol of the period but had the additional charm for government of raising vast sums in taxation and draining away excess demand. The flow of American imports, then, could not easily be stanched, and, since the rest of the sterling area was in much the same predicament, no contributions to the dollar pool could be expected from that quarter.

Yet it has already been remarked that in the crisis year of 1947 Britain's overall deficit, as subsequently revised, accounts for little more than one third of the dollar drain. The key to the position turns out to be the sterling area, not in its traditional role of squaring Britain's current account, but in its call upon British capital to finance its own deficits. In order to make the sums add up in 1947, it must be supposed that there was a net outflow of capital of £643 million, predominantly to the sterling area. This sum represented about 8 per cent of net national income and was thus being saved at this heroic rate by a country in which bread and potatoes were rationed. If anyone wants an exemplar of the Victorian values of thrift and abstinence, they need look no further than Mr Attlee's Britain.

The pattern of capital exports to the sterling area, indeed, steadily complemented the dollar deficit. Cairncross shows that over the whole period 1945–52 there was a margin of £1,700 million on the balance of payments over and above the current account deficit. This was the amount of capital which, in one form or another, went abroad – about £900 million to the sterling area. As Cairncross mildly observes, this was a sum virtually equivalent to the American Loan, and hardly the purpose for which it had been procured. This analysis points to a structural drain upon the British balance of payments, coming to a peak in 1947, which "reflected the state of the current account of the United Kingdom and the rest of the sterling area with the dollar area". With this underlying imbalance, there was bound to be acute strain upon the gold and dollar reserves. It follows that convertibility itself accounted for a relatively modest loss of perhaps £200 million, chiefly in the late-summer panic of 1947.

The essential problem, then, remained that of the dollar gap – bridged in the short term by the inception of Marshall Aid. To some extent the convertibility crisis removed American objections to the subsequent measures of trade discrimination which became necessary. For Britain's ability to break even on her balance of payments by the end of 1948 highlighted the need to redress her trading position in dollar markets. As Cairncross modestly reveals in a footnote, the Economic Adviser to the Board of Trade began submitting minutes on this matter on Christmas Eve, 1948, urging devaluation from a position of strength. The real point was to make the soft currencies harder and the hard currencies softer by means of making the leading hard currency (the dollar) dearer in terms of the leading soft currency (sterling).

It was not a particularly complex argument but it demanded a degree of economic sophistication to appreciate it. The totemistic status of the currency, however, put off serious debate until sterling came under pressure in the summer of 1949. Good and bad reasoning were certainly mixed up together, but it is remarkable how important the conversion of the experts, whether ministers or officials, proved to be in paving the way for devaluation in September 1949. Cairncross concludes: "It was left to three young and relatively junior ministers – Gaitskell, Wilson and Jay – all of them economists, accidentally in a position to decide, and accidentally led by a minister (Gaitskell) of principle and determination who was not even a member of the Cabinet." The impact upon the gold and dollar reserves was immediately favourable. Indeed by the end of 1950 Gaitskell considered that the reserves would be "startlingly high". The Americans were so impressed that they promptly changed the rules on Marshall Aid and cut it off from January 1, 1951.

By this point, however, the incipient British *Wirtschaftswunder* had been eclipsed by the Korean War, not least in the minds of the policy-makers in Washington. The result was to impose upon the convalescent British economy the strains of an onerous rearmament programme. Cairncross quotes the informal assurances given to Attlee, that the United States would "pick up the cheque". There are two tell-tale indications of the authenticity of this remark. First, the man must surely have said (in American) "check". Second, it partook of the character of all verbal undertakings in notoriously not being worth the paper it was written on.

At the end of 1949 the planned defence expenditure for the years 1951–3 was a total programme of £2,340 million. By January 1951 [illegible] Bevan, the leading critic of this increase, it was part of the Russian strategy to induce the Western democracies to impair their economies in this way. To be sure the programme was heavier than proved feasible – a judgment reached with hindsight by Winston Churchill and with foresight by Harold Wilson.

Even at its peak rearmament fell 30 per cent below the level planned. Cairncross's assessment is that it "probably did less harm to the economy, in the short run at least, than the rise in import prices that resulted from rearmament elsewhere". Britain, in short, was simply in no position to opt out unilaterally from these perils. It is none the less true that the Attlee Government ought to have Korea inscribed upon its tombstone. As for the picking up of checks, the prevarications of the United States were described in a Treasury memorandum of February 1952 as "more readily understandable if their purpose was to weaken the U.K. economy, rather than to strengthen it".

There was general agreement that Labour stood for planning: there was widesprend disagreement about what planning meant. Cairncross distinguishes between "a socialist, egalitarian, approach which saw planning as a purely organisational activity akin to the planning that goes on within a productive enterprise, an army or, for that matter, a political party; and a liberal, Keynesian, approach which saw planning as a corrective to the operation of market forces and dwelt particularly on the need for a level of effective demand adequate to maintain full employment".

The difference was indirectly reflected in preferences between manpower and money as accounting units. These were really two ways of approaching the problem of excess demand, which could be presented as either a manpower shortage or an inflationary gap. The initiative for an overall plan had come in 1945 from James Meade, as the new head of the Economic Section of the Cabinet Office, and this was the origin of the annual *Economic Surveys*. Although the drafts were prepared in terms of national income, ministers found the alternative manpower version more intelligible, and when the *Economic Survey* was first published in 1947 this was the form it took. This device helped conceal the fact that the *Survey* year began in January whereas the Budget, which Meade regarded as "the main instrument of carrying out the plan", was framed for the financial year, starting in April. From 1948 the *Economic Survey* published its assessment in terms of national income, and the manpower budget disappeared without trace by 1951. This betokened the real shift from physical towards budgetary planning which took place after 1947.

"Socialist" planning was often concerned with micro-economic problems on which its record was not strikingly successful. The fuel crisis stood out as an indictment of the competence of industrial planning – or perhaps of planners, as Cairncross tartly comments. Shinwell's smug claim in October 1946 had been: "Everyone knows that there is going to be a serious crisis in the coal industry – except the Minister of Fuel and Power." By February 1947, with power-cuts crippling industrial output, the self-esteem of a better man than the minister of Fuel and Power would have been shattered (though Shinwell himself hardly seems to have been affected).

"Liberal" planning, by contrast, was essentially macro-economic, and it was here that the Government increasingly placed the emphasis. In his 1950 Budget speech, Cripps repudiated the notion that planning had been abandoned, insisting now that the Budget "can be described as the most powerful instrument for influencing economic policy which is available to the government". The Treasury's crab-like scuttle towards Keynesian policies is brought out well. In Dalton's case it was virtually a deathbed conversion, and only in his fourth Budget, in November 1947, did he explicitly relate his measures to the problem of controlling inflation. It was thus Dalton who piled up the Budget surplus over which Cripps subsequently sat guard as though he owned it. Demand was now purposefully taken out of the economy by restraint on personal consumption, thus rendering many physical controls increasingly otiose. Cairncross concludes, however, that "the changeover to economic [illegible] was a very gradual one and not completed when the Labour government lost office".

This judgment is in keeping with the findings of other historians who have been pushing forward the date at which the Keynesian era in economic management can be said to commence. The Keynesian influence on British economic performance, for good or ill, has also been discounted somewhat by economists, ever since a seminal article by R. C. O. Matthews probing the reasons for post-war full employment. We may well accept a Keynesian analysis of how employment was maintained on the demand side. But it has become clear that government had little role to play in deliberately boosting demand, which was already too high rather than too low. Admittedly it took some time for this point to sink in on Labour politicians whose weapons had been forged to fight the last post-war slump. Cripps's fear of deflation was apparently still lively in 1949.

The secular boom after the war has to be explained mainly by a continued high level of investment. This was in turn sustained by the need to make good after the war, by the demand for capital which full employment itself created, by an accelerating rate of innovation, and by cheap money. Much of this, it can be seen, was cumulative in its effect upon expectations (but then, as Keynes proclaimed long ago, prosperity *is* cumulative). To these four factors Cairncross adds the point that government policy was permissive in its expansionist mood and that "the public and financial markets had not yet learnt those self-fulfilling truths that made them treat increases in the money supply as the inevitable harbinger of inflation".

Looking back from the 1980s, it is the relative decline of the British economy which preoccupies us. German industrial production is now nearly three times that of the United Kingdom, that of France nearly double. It is a far cry from 1951, when Britain produced more than both of them combined. Britain was treading the path of recovery in an era of expansion, and the growth in world trade was not generally anticipated at the time. Given both the opportunities and the constraints, the British Government's priorities can be seen from the evidence which Cairncross tabulates. During the years 1946–52, the Gross Domestic Product increased by 15 per cent in real terms. Nearly three-quarters of this increment was absorbed by exports. Most of this in turn went into improving the balance of payments, with a relatively small offset from increased imports. Investment made the next largest call on resources, with consumer spending a poor third.

There have been few governments, as Cairncross concludes, which have "held back consumption more assiduously so as to let the pace be set by exports and investment, as recommended by a later generation of experts on growth". In a world where virtue was duly rewarded one might expect this to turn out as a success story. As it was, the British people found that winning the war entitled them to a régime of austerity, and the Labour Party discovered that its responsible stewardship earned it electoral oblivion. In a persuasive and painstaking work, Sir Alec Cairncross has set our understanding of economic policy in the post-war years upon a secure footing. His book, moreover, like all good historical writing, speaks to the concerns of two periods: that in which as well as that of which he writes.

John Llewellyn, Stephen Potter and Lee Samuelson argue in *Economic Forecasting and Policy: The International Dimension* (288pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.95. 0 7102 0600 3) that national economic policy goals will be more readily attainable if countries had access to reliable, internationally consistent economic forecasts. More international co-operation in determining national policy settings would, they hope, result in more successful national policies. As they argue in their introduction: "The aim at no point is to suggest that any country should take action that is not in its national self-interest. Rather . . . it will be possible for countries to take individual actions which, taken together, lead to a better outcome, for all together and each separately, than would result from non-cooperative

The playwright and his people

Frederic Raphael

DONALD SPOTO
The Kindness of Strangers: The life of Tennessee Williams
409pp. Bodley Head. £12.95.
0 370 30847 6

In synopsis the scenario seems familiar. The first act concerns, and with a minatory richness of psychological implication, childhood and adolescence. There are cruelties and ironies that will certainly mark the characters for life. The act ends in the escape into literature of a febrile young talent and in the failure of his beloved sister to find a way out. In the second act, the young writer, once "Miss Nancy" to his *macho* father, teeters on the verge of artistic extinction and then, as his breakthrough play seems about to fold out of town, is saved by, of all unlikely agencies, the critics. They combine to applaud the inspired performance of an alcoholic actress who will be stricken with cancer before the run is finished. Fame brings financial ease and sexual liberation: the author goes on from hit to hit, and score to score, until it seems that nothing can stop him. He is gorged on prizes and royalties, but having shocked once, he must shock again, with ever higher voltage. Sex, drink and drugs first stimulate and then drain his energies. Accusations of genius flatter and flatten him: he suffers from the loneliness of those who are never left alone. At the high point of his career, when every actor wants to be in his plays and every producer wants to stage them, he is stricken by doubt and sterility. Desperate, he begins to parody himself and to lash out at his friends and, of course, at the once friendly, now fiendish, critics. In the third act, awash with alcohol and zonked beyond redemption, he lurches downhill, seeks consolation in religion, nostalgia and the collection of awards for work he can no longer produce, hopes to make a triumphant comeback with a last, flawed play, flops and chokes to death in a hotel bedroom. Curtains.

Once, during the try-out for a play that wasn't working, as they say, Tennessee Williams watched the dwindling audience and observed, "They haven't exactly taken it to their hearts, have they?" His own story, as recounted by Donald Spoto, may evoke pity, but it makes him difficult to stick with. As so often, the first act is the most moving and the most unusual: failures fail differently, but successes all seem to fail in much the same way. However, Williams wrote at least one masterpiece (of an almost insolent, seamless assurance) and several plays that have an unquestionable place in the repertoire, as well as a few short stories ("Desire and the Black Masseur", "One Arm" and "Three Players of a Summer Game") whose quality is worthy of any demanding anthology. Beyond these specific achievements, he marked out a certain territory as his own and made anyone who followed him on to it seems like a trespasser or an impostor. If purists accuse him of confusing melodrama with tragedy, it cannot be said that such confusion was improper to his times. Not the least enviable of his talents was his capacity to devise brilliant titles. If the streetcar named Desire did indeed run in the streets of New Orleans, his appropriation of it was a stroke of emblematic genius. The American talent for advertisement begins in choosing the right tag for the product and in promoting clichés into catchy slogans, as he did with *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. There is something feisty and unliterary in that kind of zinginess, which by no means entails that he was a careless or unselfconscious writer.

He was Thomas Lanier before he was Tennessee. His father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, came from that glamorous state, where his family counted three governors among its Huguenot lineage. Having been expelled from classy schools for hell-raising, Cornelius had sunk to travelling salesman before he proposed to Edwina Dakin, the daughter of an Episcopalian pastor and a somewhat pretentious, downtrodden Mississippi belle. She returned from her honeymoon to her parents' house, disillusioned and pregnant with her first child, Rose. Thomas was born some fourteen months after his sister, in March 1911, and another son, Rose were close, all too close friends. Their passionate but innocent romance was a parenthesis in time from whose brackets both found it hard to extract themselves.

The defeated but impenitent South has always been another country, hardly more accessible or less haunted than its past. Moralists find it absurd that a society nostalgic for slavery should vaunt itself on gracious manners and handsome phrases, but to rummage too knowingly for the savage reality is to miss the genuineness of those antique courtesies, *la profondeur de la surface*. The revenge and the consolation of the Confederacy, like that of Ireland, has been largely literary: words are valued and gilded by those bereft of flashier fortunes. Edwina Williams compounded regional habit with increasingly neurotic garrulity; she was one of those "moth-like" characters whom her son was so often to expose to alluring and ruinous flames. Their delicacy, however maddening with euphemistic cant, could be as touching as it was hypocritical. The mature playwright could never abide more than twenty minutes of Edwina's complaisant company, but she was regularly at his first nights, applauding the evanescent portraits for which she had posed.

Earthier speech came from the children's nurse, Ozzie. Under her imaginative guidance, young Tom could announce that he was "diggin' to de debbil", a pretty slogan for one whose immoral delving would one day be denounced by so stringent a literary intelligence as that of Cardinal Spellman. Tom was a sickly boy (Rose was hardly more robust) and Ozzie's tales were the best medicine when diphtheria, kidney infection and general muscular debility kept him, not unwillingly, from school. The wrong side of the tracks soon looked like the more glamorous, and warmer place to be. Although Spoto does not cite the story (Benjamin Nelson does in his 1961 study), it seems that Ozzie quit after being called a "nigger" by her loving charge. Since he was not yet seven years old, Tom need not be judged too gravely. However, it may well be – as biographers say when short of evidence – that Tom was deliberately malicious. One recalls how Byron, who appears as an *alter ego* in *Camino Real*, used to goad his mother, and even stuck a hat pin into her during a sermon. Tom's needling of Ozzie was perhaps the forerunner of later "experiments" when his recipe for an entertaining evening was to set cats among pigeons, inciting his friends to flap and scratch while he noted the consequent dialogue.

Much nonsense is talked about the autonomy of fiction, which is systematically parasitic on life, though the libel lawyers insist we deny it. Authors like Spoto, whose fine-meshed nets bring up the smallest minnows of deep-skulking gossip (which is why we relish them), prove that rearrangement and transposition are far more common than flights of baseless fancy. Certainly Williams was ardently dependent on the raw ment of practical, brutal experience. How superbly typical to have Stanley Kowalski carry a red package from the butcher on to the stage when he makes his entrance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. (That supreme prick took his name from a one-time workmate of the author's, who worked beside him in a shoe factory, and his character from the free-ranging Cornelius.) Above all, it was sister Rose whose tragedy furnished Williams with lifelong inspiration and anguish. Rose was the victim of her mother's squeamishness, her father's indifference (or worse) and, above all, of her doctors' aggressive vanity. Increasingly neurotic, she appalled her mother by obscene language and by accusations that the drunken, lecherous Cornelius had tried to have sex with her. (What truth there was in the charge, or even whether it was a fantasy of Edwina's, we can never know.) At all events, in 1937, Rose was subjected to a pre-frontal lobotomy which, it was promised, would calm her down. It did, for the remaining vacant decades of her long life. Tennessee – he took the racy name after publishing his first article on the unlikely topic "Can A Good Wife Be A Good Sport?" (she couldn't) – tried with honourable consistency to make amends for his sister's mutilation and would spend hours in her dulled company, recalling the years before the family moved to St Louis and exposed her to unendurable stress. If he too hated St Louis, it was probably his salva-

Tennessee Williams with Donald Windham, Tennquil LeClercq, Gore Vidal and Buffie Johnson in the Café Nicholson, about 1951: reproduced from the book reviewed here.

stocked *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; this was 1926, when no London shelves would have carried a copy. The influence of D. H. Lawrence was greater than that of any other writer, however outraged Lawrence might have been by the polymorphous perversities of his admirer.

Hart Crane was the other talisman who accompanied the dramatist from his earliest years and may have accounted for frequent announcements of his imminent death from all manner of mortal afflictions, including, at one stage, breast cancer. In fact since he lived past seventy, he must have had a remarkably robust disposition; his intake of liquor and drugs, dispensed in the 1960s with liberal irresponsibility by Max Jacobson, known as "Dr Feel Good", would have narcotized a hippopotamus. He was, he said, "a virgin with either sex" until the age of twenty-six, but his lifelong enemy, lost time, was made up for thereafter. Not only ships but whole flotillas passed in the night. Money slipped through his often generous fingers and it was useful in ministering to other parts: the theme of prostitution, the close link between lust and lucre, haunts his plays and his life and makes his worship of Lawrence seem wantonly superficial. The one undoubtedly true love of an egregiously compromised existence was Frank Merlo, whom he met in 1948 and with whom he set up house in Key West, an enclave where homosexuality

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423pp. Viking. £14.95.
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(and Ernest Hemingway) found tolerant surroundings, at least until 1979 when a punk backlash – and Williams's immodest behaviour – left him badly beaten up. Merlo's dedication – even close friends had nothing but praise for him – deserved a better "marriage" than it secured. He craved fidelity and Williams was contemptuous of it: if the dramatist dreamed of true and deep relationships, his waking hours were loud with their rupture. As the result of a giggling capriciousness no more charming for being commonplace in the wonderful world of the theatre, he sacked Audrey Wood, the theatrical agent who had taken him up when he was unknown and had engineered his success. She was not the only victim of drug-induced paranoia. Williams was reconciled with Merlo, on the latter's death-bed, and the character of Alvaro Mangiacavallo is the best tribute to the good man whom he nicknamed "little Horse".

Showbiz biography has replaced the lives of the saints as an inspirational form. The dispirited third act in Williams's case suggests the uncertainty of salvation here below (the played-out playwright converted to Catholicism, under his brother's benevolent eye, with a petulant deference that makes Talleyrand's reversion seem almost starry-eyed). We are left with an impression of panicky self-centredness which only the hagiographer will promise betokened true artistic genius. Perhaps sausage-makers and French polishers lead equally lurid lives, had we but the cuttings and the tape-recordings to document them. Spoto's researches seem to have been thorough (though there is the odd venial slip) and they yield a compilation garrulous with inverted commas. His critical commentary is uneven and often vacuously portentous: "The fact that Williams began this story at the height of World War II and completed it just after may explain the theme of universal horror." It may also explain the price of tea, but the hermetic world of "Desire and the Black Masseur", on any reasonable reading, suggests a mind entirely taken up with the hustling bustle of the Vieux Carré in New Orleans from which Williams drew so much inspiration. (The gloating Germans whom he met in Acapulco in 1940 and who wander into *Camino Real* are just about the only sign he gives of awareness of what happened in Europe.)

In the end, as is salutary, Williams's works prove much more interesting than the background to them. The playwright is much more dependent on other people – and their kindness – than the novelist. He becomes famous, if he does, for remarkably thin manuscripts, but he must seduce and seduce again – actors, agents and producers – and he is always the plaything, as he is sometimes the darling, of fashion. We are often reminded here that show business is a business indeed: even Tennessee Williams could not, in the last sorry phase of his sensational life, get his work put on. Celebrity seekers and celebrities themselves, who had thronged to his side in the years of prize-winning fame, found reasons not to come to his seventieth birthday. (Kanin was there, Kazan was not.) Torn between insatiable lust and the dread of time – death's metosis – he followed to the letter the instructions given to his finest creation: "They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!" I hope he made it to the last and that his shade is cruising there, among the magnolias and the violets, murmuring "Blanche DuBois, *c'est moi*."

George Balanchine, the greatest choreographer the classical ballet has ever known, died two years ago in April. His deification proceeds apace. Bernard Taper's sympathetic biography, first published in the 1960s, then in a revised and updated edition in the 1970s, has now been reissued in a third, presumably final, recension. In a growing number of dancers' backstage confessions, Balanchine looms, the all-important reference point and object of endless speculation, like the Sun King in court memoirs. The genesis of his last masterpiece, *Mozartiana* (1981), has been told in a full-length study by Robert Maiorano and Valerie Brooks. Already, many books have been churned out that nobody needs, while many books worth having remain unwritten. Aside from occasional reviews and essays, the critical literature is sparse, though surely not for long. An industry has swung into full production.

Choreography by George Balanchine: A catalogue of works and *Portrait of Mr B.: Photographs of George Balanchine with an essay by Lincoln Kirstein* are both memorials, though the approaches they take could hardly differ more. The *Catalogue* is supported by a variety of ancillary lists and chronologies. It is embellished with a preface by Kirstein, Balanchine's partner in the creation of the School of American Ballet and the New York City Ballet, which now approaches its fortieth year. But, principally, it is what its title promises: a systematic abstract (with original casts, production details, and occasional brief notes) of Balanchine's work in dance, from his first student efforts in Russia around the time of the Revolution, to the Stravinsky miniature *Variations* (1982), the haunted coda to his astonishing six-decade career. The *Portrait* is actually a scrapbook, but if its makers' conceit be allowed, the portrait is in a failed analytical-cubist style, presenting its subject simultaneously in intersecting planes from different points of view and indeed in different media. Besides the essay (previously printed in the *New York Review of Books*) and the photographs (many of them familiar), the book also contains an informedly chatty set of notes to the pictures; two conversations with Balanchine (both previously published), recorded by the writer Jonathan Cott; and the classic – perennially, absurdly overpraised – essay "Three Sides of *Agon*", by the late poet and critic Edwin Denby; as well as a hero-worshipping, rather pompous foreword (new) by Peter Martins, who has inherited Balanchine's company. ("We aren't easily impressed", sniffs Martins as spokesman for the tribe of Mr B. "and we can't be conned and we have a special dislike for the pretentious.")

Balanchine once remarked that the story of his life was "all in the programmes". The scrupulously prepared *Catalogue* far transcends its narrow purpose as a reference work, and proves that proposition true. Inevitably it tantalizes as much as it satisfies, for much of Balanchine's work is lost. Still, it may be read (practically) straight through, for sheer enjoyment. The 425 log-style entries chart Balanchine's course from St Petersburg via Monte Carlo, Paris, London and Copenhagen to the New World. They bear witness to his fluency (as late as 1972, for his epochal Stravinsky Festival, he could prepare eight new ballets to première in a single week – four of them masterpieces) and his flexibility (he was as much at home making dances for the music hall or the movies as for the ballet stage), and even capture, almost novelistically, traits of Balanchine's personality.

He lent his talent generously to charitable causes – and if the *Catalogue* has no place to tell the story that he once donated bulletproof vests to the New York police force, it does preserve the memory of *Resurgence*, a *pièce d'occasion* he created to help raise funds for the March of Dimes in its fight against infantile paralysis. His exquisite teenaged student Tanaquil LeClercq, later to be his wife, played "A Dancer", with the choreographer himself cast as "Threat of Polio". (By a bitter twist of fate, that very disease would later strike LeClercq down at the height of her career. She was then twenty-seven.)

The *Portrait* conveys no such texture of felt experience. Few of the photographs tell much of a story. Most have little aesthetic quality, and all are flatly reproduced. The main excuse for the book is the essay "A Ballet Master's Belief". Unlike the graceful, uncharacteristically muted preface to the *Catalogue*, it is an exercise in Kirstein's patented American Mandarin style: oblique, opaque, yet brisk, in the manner, perhaps, of a latter-day Sir Thomas Browne, though without his flares of passion. Kirstein speaks much of angels and order, rending Balanchine's work as a teacher and artist for its largest cosmotheological implications. He may or may not intend a cabbalistic second meaning that hinges on a pun. "Season after season," Kirstein writes, "works were on order, like fresh skirts, shirts, ties and trousers." On order, and on order from whom? Very earthbound angels – who in theatrical parlance are the people who foot the bills. Kirstein knows the money side of art as well as anyone but does not dwell on it here. The gnomic, practical Mr B. might have liked the ambiguity. He was, after all, the man who said, "My Muse must come to me on 'union' time." And, again and again, she did.

Tip-top tap

Dilys Powell

BOB THOMAS
Astaire: The man, the dancer
340pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
0 297 78402 1

Bob Thomas's biography is essentially the story of Astaire's struggle to achieve the precision by which his life has been governed. By the end, though, something more important emerges: a passion for creation. The story begins ninety years ago when an officer in the Austrian army, driven, it is said, by some matter of discipline, emigrated to Omaha. Presently he took his two children to New York; the girl was to train as a dancer, and it was thought that the boy, who was a little younger, might as well join her. A few years later Adele and Fred Astaire were young professionals in vaudeville, from where they graduated to the theatre. By 1922 the Astaires were enjoying in London a success greater than anything they had found in New York. Their subsequent careers are well enough known : the first experiences in the cinema, Adele's marriage, Fred, himself soon to marry, left performing on his own – and the catalogue of marvellous films.

Thomas has known Astaire for four decades, long enough to produce a reliable if conventional record, but one that gains greatly from the inclusion of Astaire's own comments and notes. Some facts surprise and fascinate: it is easy to forget, for example, that in 1933 Astaire was dancing with Joan Crawford in *Dancing Lady*. His association with Hermes Pan, who worked with him on the design of dances, was important; so was his partnership with Ginger Rogers, though he may not always have realized it. There is the splendid story of her appearance for the "Cheek To Cheek" number in *Top Hat* wearing a dress covered with feathers which billowed in his face and made him sneeze. All the same Irene Dunne said that Ginger "gave Fred sex appeal". Not that he ever wanted a regular partner; even with Adele he disliked being taken as part of a team. He could be a stirring solo dancer. "More than anyone else", said Margot Fonteyn, he "led men back to their rightful place in the world of dance."

But partners there had to be: in the photographs the faces smile and smile – Rita Hayworth and Joan Leslie, Eleanor Powell and Lucille Bremer. Thomas takes the story beyond the record of star dancing. Official retirement came after *Blue Skies* in 1948, but one still finds Astaire dancing, with Vera Ellen, with Judy Garland; he was sixty-eight when he appeared in *Finian's Rainbow*. By then, though, he was moving into dramatic roles: committing suicide in *On the Beach*, shrinking from guilt as one of the haunted victims of *Ghost Story*.

One thinks of Fred Astaire as the embodiment of grace. The photographs, the stills, cannot reproduce the elegance of body and limbs: they can only suggest the poise caught in mid-action, the exquisite co-ordination which governed the reply to music. But the book, orderly, chronological, justifies itself by its emphasis on Astaire's passion for creating new experiences, new explorations of rhythm and gesture. His dancing was a delight but it was also a new kind of dancing, an enrichment of tap, a liberation of ballroom exhibition.

London Nights

'Lugubrious and brutal scenes' – Verlaine,
Reviewing Arthur Symons' *London Nights*.
What would those two have said, I speculate,
Set down in 1985's Soho.

Not that I often take the West End train
From these six-miles-away suburban heights
Where the worst threats to order are chocolate-
Bar wrappers on the pavement, or video-

Recorder thefts by truant boys in quiet
Hours, from houses where the rose runs riot.

ROY FULLER

Arts Council
OF GREAT BRITAIN
WRITERS' BURSARIES
1985/86

The Arts Council intends to award three bursaries of £5,000 to three novelists whose work is of outstanding literary quality and who have had at least one novel published. The bursaries will be given to finance a period of concentrated work on the applicants' next novel.

The scheme is open to writers who are resident in England. Further details and application forms are available from: the Literature Department, Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU. Tel: 01-629 9495, Ext. 377.

The closing date for completed applications is 30th September 1985.

(697)

Subjective saturnalia

John Weightman

KEITH BEAUMONT
Alfred Jarry: A critical and biographical study
364pp. Leicester University Press. £28.
0 7185 1244 8

Among the many French literary eccentrics and bohemians of the past hundred years, Jarry is one of the most legendary and yet least well known. From 1896 onwards he was famous as the author of *Ubu Roi*, the first theatrical event to produce a great anti-rationalist shock-wave that was to go on echoing through the 1920s in Surrealism, and again, during the 1950s, in the Theatre of the Absurd. His addiction to absinthe, his passion for cycling and his staccato diction are mentioned in many Parisian memoirs of the time, but his personality remain elusive. After his death in 1907, at the early age of thirty-four, one of his works, *Gestes et opinions du Dr Faustroll*, seems to have enjoyed a clandestine life in a narrow circle of *aficionados*, because it led to the founding, in 1948, of a nebulous institution, the "Collège de Pataphysique", a sort of jokey freemasonry of Jarry admirers keen on fostering his memory.

But, apart from *Ubu*, which was revived several times in various places under the impetus of the Theatre of the Absurd, it cannot be said that any part of his work has appealed much to the general literary public. A first volume of *Oeuvres complètes* was brought out in the Gallimard Pléiade series in 1972, no doubt in anticipation of the centenary of his birth, but it must have fallen on stony ground, because the promised second volume has never materialized.

Keith Beaumont's study is obviously intended to rescue Jarry from his position as minimally recognized *écrivain maudit*. If I am not mistaken, it is the first book in English entirely devoted to Jarry, and the first full commentary written in an academic spirit, since the *French books*, such as those of Michel Arrivé and Noël Arnaud, tend to be based on the assumption that Jarry's genius is self-evident. Dr Beaumont tries to argue the case, going methodically through the surprisingly voluminous writings, fitting them into the chronological sequence of Jarry's unhappy career and – rather gingerly – weighing the pros and cons.

As regards the life, he is content to accept the known facts without attempting to explain them. Why Jarry should have seriously entertained the crazy idea that alcohol is a superfood for neo-Nietzschean supermen remains a mystery. So, too, does his well-documented habit of imitating, in his day-to-day existence, the grotesque language and outrageous mannerisms of Père Ubu. From all accounts, after 1896, he behaved like a ventriloquist who has been taken over by the imaginary personality of his dummy.

Moreover, his behaviour seems always to have verged on the suicidal. He flouted common sense in all his dealings with the outside world; he failed examinations that his less gifted contemporaries passed; he squandered a small inheritance from his father and thereafter led a disorganized, Grub-Street existence which landed him in such debts that his precious bicycle, acquired years previously, had still not been paid for at the time of his death. One of the saddest ironies is that the two school-friends with whom he had first evolved the Ubu fable on the basis of the traditional folklore of the Lycée de Rennes later came to have scant patience with either him or the Ubu story. All in all, Jarry's biography is as puzzling and depressing as those of Baudelaire and Rimbaud. Perhaps the tubercular meningitis which was diagnosed after his death had been troubling him a long time before and helps to explain the eccentricities and alcoholism. Perhaps, too, after the homosexuality of his adolescence, he was hampered by the confused sexual feelings which surface quite incoherently, or so it seems to me, at many points in his work.

After bewailing the life, we have to face the question: how positively can we react to the bulk of his output? *Ubu Roi* is secure enough as a schoolboy farce raised to the level of a general anarchistic statement, with the central character of Ubu as a sort of Id rampant, or a simplified, more demonic Falstaff. In the various versions of the Ubu cycle, Jarry, as Beaumont says, created an archetype, and that is a considerable achievement, whatever the quality of the background from which it sprang. To quote a more extreme example, Tarzan of the Apes survives, although Edgar Rice Burroughs has been forgotton.

It is the other texts which raise a problem: *Les Minutes de sable mémorial*, a symbolico-Gothic medley; impalpable Symbolist dramas such as *César-Antéchrist*; *Faustroll* ("roman scientifique") *Les Jours et les nuits* ("roman d'un déserteur"); *Le Surmâle* ("roman moderne"), a priapic fantasy which establishes a strange parallel between cycling and sex, and so on. In the course of his discussion, Beaumont blows hot and cold, as if he couldn't quite make up his mind about their quality. But when he gets to his concluding chapter, he plays safe, as it were, by praising them all *en bloc* as embodying a great explosion of individualism, a possibly profound meditation on language, and a passionate search for the Absolute, culminating in the assertion that man is God. He also claims that their many, probably deliberate, contradictions somehow point to the higher truth that "all literature is a vast, elaborate and intricate game".

I find myself jibbing at this assessment. Jarry was certainly a born writer; he had an enormous range of French at his disposal and was obviously extremely fluent and prolific. But, apart from *Ubu*, none of the works seems to have much shape, in spite of the labels he gave to some of them. Even *Les Jours et les nuits*, which is based on his tragi-comic experiences during military service, moves bewilderingly through disparate registers and is not wholly comprehensible. Almost all the texts are made up of fragments, and within the fragments some sentences may be hermetic, while others, if relatively clear, lack any decipherable interconnection.

It may be that Jarry was unable to control the images he invented, but it is also the case that he did not try to order them in the direction of aesthetic coherence. On the contrary, following in the wake of Mallarmé and Verlaine, he echoes their doctrine of symbolist suggestiveness but carries it much further than did either when he proclaims, in the preface to *Les Minutes*: "Suggérer au lieu de dire, faire dans la route des phrases des carrefours de tous les mots." It stands to reason that, if every word is a crossroads, there is in fact no road along which the traffic of sense can flow in any one direction, and meaning evaporates. Given the essentially transitive nature of language, significance, however complex, can never be other than the effect of an act of comprehension performed in linear time. However, reason and meaning, in the ordinary sense, are of no interest to Jarry; his favourite mode of operation is a form of self-cancelling linguistic saturnalia, a colourful riot of words, the referents of which, being shut away in his subjective imagination, are beyond the reach of the baffled reader.

Beaumont recognizes this, more or less, when he says about *César-Antéchrist*: "symbol is heaped upon symbol to the point where all become inextricable. And this extraordinary web of 'symbols' becomes in reality merely a symbolism of symbols, turning indefinitely . . . in a closed circle and 'signifying' nothing but itself." He also comes near to admitting it when trying to decide whether the "pataphysical" doctrine of *Faustroll* is a deep philosophical insight into the limitations of science and the mystery of the universe or "simply a gigantic spoof, a huge and elaborate practical joke". He concedes that Jarry's remarks about science and metaphysics can be seen, for the most part, as empty word-play, but then opts for the conclusion that *Faustroll* is "a marvellous piece of wryly comic writing".

Although I count myself an Absurdist, I must have a blind spot, because I can see nothing very funny in such pseudo-formulae as "La 'pataphysique étudiera les lois qui régissent les exceptions et expliquera l'univers supplémentaire à celui-ci", or "Dieu est le point tangent de Zéro et de l'Infini". the same point about the futility of cosmogonies is surely made much more amusingly by the old French folk-saying: "Tout est dans tout, et réciproquement".

In addition to the tragedy of the life, then, there is also a tragedy of the work. Apart from the kernel of the Ubu story and a few other lucid passages, the thousand or so pages of the Pléiade volume, bright with unusual images, gleaming with rare words, shining with apparent linguistic brilliance, are in the end like a heap of fairy gold, which dissolves when one tries to grasp it, because – *pace* the Collège de Pataphysique – the scintillating verbal tokens cannot be converted into a fully satisfactory psychological experience. No doubt Jarry was, in his way, a pioneer of Absurdism, but he seems to have missed the essential fact that the so-called rational use of language – in science, religion, literature or any other field – is sufficiently absurd and mysterious in itself not to require such systematic and nullifying subversion.

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Yale University Press
13 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JF

(695)

Making sense of oneself

Adam Morton

RICHARD WOLLHEIM
The Thread of Life
288pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.
0 521 26346 8

This is a book about life, death and memory. Or rather, it is about the role that memory and various similar attitudes play in holding together a life. For Richard Wollheim it is the differences between these attitudes that are important. He wants to argue that a life which could be described as the life of a person must be unified by a complementary set of states and attitudes whose basic feature is that they relate past experiences to present experiences and actions. His strategy consists in part in presentations of familiar features of the mind in such a way as to bring out their role in connecting past and present. Belief, for example, is presented as a way in which past experiences produce present dispositions. But another central part of the strategy is to argue that some things which we might have thought to be accidents of our psychology and our way of life are actually essential features of what it is to live the life of a person. Life essentially begins with confusions about the limits of the self, is coloured by fantasy and given unity as much by the need to overcome the past as by the links memory provides with it, and inevitably aims at a stable conception of self and other and an accommodation with the tyranny of the past. Unless we take these all as fundamental we cannot make sense of love, friendship and death.

This is, evidently, a mixture of many elements. It applies standard ideas from the philosophy of mind to a generally psychoanalytic conception of desire and imagination, illustrated by frequent allusions to art and literature, in order to produce conclusions which are in part relevant to the concerns of any reflective person. This is exactly what one would expect from Professor Wollheim, whose earlier writings have connected both Freudian [illegible] the mainstream of philosophy. And the intention is admirable. Indeed, his conclusions are admirable: it is easy to see why one might want to defend and work out just this kind of synthesis. But he must have faced a considerable problem in finding the right direction for his arguments. For the aim is not to defend or explain particular psychoanalytic ideas, but somehow to use a background of such ideas to make enlightening claims which could be appreciated even by someone convinced of the falsehood of psychoanalysis.

The device Wollheim chooses is to make a series of claims about what one might call the "mental repertoire" of a person – about what range of states of mind a person has, and what in a very general way, these states must be like for such a person to have something like a human life. It is a clever idea, because it allows him to pick the states which would have to be central if anything like psychoanalysis were a true theory of human psychology, without committing him to persuading his readers that any psychoanalytic claims are actually true.

Up to this point, I am pretty sure I am following Wollheim accurately. This is his plan and those are his ultimate conclusions. Many of the details of his analyses of various states of mind are clearly worked out, and the arguments usually convincing. It is the middle ground that is not so clear, between the details and the grander aims. Consider for example what he says about fantasy. I think he wants to argue that we should consider fantasy as just as inevitable an element of a person as belief, desire or perception. And while this is an attractive idea it is at first rather implausible, for we could easily, it seems, imagine a person who never had anything like a fantasy. Not so easily, Wollheim by implication suggests, for to do that we would have to imagine a person either without imagination or with an imagination linked to a perfectly accurate conception of himself – an angel rather than a person. The reasons are that fantasy as Wollheim understands it is a particular kind of imagination, one in which a person imagines an event either as a participant or as an observer, but in such a way that the self which is participating or observing is not the person as one really knows oneself to be but as one's basic desires would have one be and, moreover, as seen through a primitive conception of what a person is. Fantasy is imagination permeated by "the archaic theory of the mind" and the "omnipotence of thoughts". And so we see that one could lack fantasy in only three ways. One could just have no imagination: not as easy to conceive of as one might think. Or from the very beginning of one's life one could have had an accurate and balanced understanding of oneself; hardly the condition of a finite human being. Or one could have come to terms with one's past well enough to have acquired such an understanding, and have had it trickle down throughout one's thought and imagination: again a condition hardly attainable by creatures like us. And so persons without fantasy can only be conceived of as peripheral or limiting cases of a central concept, which is that of a person living a human life, and slowly coming to a better understanding of himself.

I think these are Wollheim's views I have just reported. I put them together from many scattered remarks about the logical character of imagination, desire and fantasy, Freud's "rat man" case, the ways in which we can react to drama and narrative, and the contents of typical fantasies. Each of the discussions is interesting, though some are hard to follow, but Wollheim leaves it to the reader to pull them together. Pulling together all the strands is often very hard. The manner of Wollheim's writing often makes it unnecessarily hard: one has to struggle through clumsy sentences, ideas alluded to paragraphs before they are explained and unnecessary culture-dropping. And sometimes simple bad writing of a kind that prefers big and peculiar words: "For is it veridical for us to experience phenomenology as inherently terminable?"

It is worth struggling past these obstacles, for more of the design becomes clearer the more one thinks about it. But some basic features remain unclear to me. The most important is Wollheim's attitude to this self of which one can have a more and a less enlightened grasp. In the first chapter of the book he argues that we cannot make sense of the unity of the experiences that make up a life without assuming an agent whose identity ties them together. And he hints there and at the end of the book that we must think of ourselves as being essentially embodied. So are all my experiences part of one life because they are the experiences of this single body? I do not think he believes this, in fact he comes near to denying it. What I think he is suggesting is that we are forced to conceive of our lives as shaped around a substantial self, and that part of what it is to live a human life is to be continually revising one's way towards an adequate conception of what that self is. But I wish he had said this, or denied it.

While in general the digressions get in the way, one is grateful for some of them. Particularly important is a chapter on morality in which Wollheim gives a potentially very fruitful account of the distinction between what is obligatory and what is valuable, seeing them as having essentially different origins and in fact lumped together under the label of morality only because of accidental features of our culture. This seems to me something that someone else could disentangle from the Freudian moral psychology in which Wollheim expresses it and turn into a really enlightening theory. And in that same chapter, one of the most readable of the book, he achieves the seemingly impossible feat of reading Mill's utilitarianism so that it becomes an exhortation to the Wollheimian examined life, and achieves it plausibly and gracefully.

The difficulties of the book are in part a result of the delicacy of the task Wollheim has set himself. He wants to do neither empirical psychology nor pure conceptual analysis; his aim is to describe us, human beings as we actually are, staying clear of both conjectures about hidden causes and abstract models that miss the particularity of being human. And this is a very tricky business, because he can make full use neither of empirical facts, which are sometimes too particular, nor of our pure concept of a person, which, applying also to Martians, angels and gods, is too general. So it is not surprising that the argument is sometimes obscure and sometimes excessively intricate. This delicacy is part of the interest of the project, though, for what is appealing about the book is just that suggestive and difficult idea, that one can describe human particularity in some detail without actually presenting a psychological theory.

One can express this another way. Suppose that there were intelligent creatures who were not human: Martians or angels. Suppose that you wanted to explain to them what it is like to be human. What you would need would be neither psychology nor conceptual analysis but something like what Wollheim is trying to provide. And so to judge the success of the book we should ask whether it would in fact do this job. Only a Martian could answer for sure, but this much seems clear: if what it was like to be such a creature was, by some accident, the same as what it is like to be human, then on reading Wollheim it would at some point surely recognize itself in us.

Reviving a master

C. B. Schmitt

MICHAEL J. B. ALLEN
The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino: A study of his Phaedrus Commentary, its sources and genesis
284pp. University of California Press. £24.
0 520 05152 1

Marsilio Ficino is one of those figures who has been brought from obscurity into a relatively central position during the past half century or so. Since the pioneering work of Paul Oskar Kristeller in the 1930s, much interest has been focused upon the man who, more than any other, was responsible for introducing the full range of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought to fifteenth-century Florence, and hence to the modern world. In addition, as more recent research has stressed, Ficino was one of the key figures in the revival of interest in magic which pervaded so many areas of sixteenth and seventeenth-century life and thought.

Foremost among the new group of Ficino scholars has been Michael J. B. Allen, whose new volume is his third inside ten years, following his editions and translations of Ficino's commentaries on the *Philebus* and *Phaedrus*. The *Platonism of Marsilio Ficino* follows closely upon his edition of the *Phaedrus* commentary and is, in fact, a detailed analysis of that work. Plato's dialogue, along with the *Symposium* (on which Ficino wrote his most famous and influential commentary), gives central place to a number of the themes found most attractive by Renaissance adherents to Platonism: poetic inspiration, arguments for human immortality, the rise and fall of the soul, and speculations on the nature of beauty. The fixing of general attention on such topics proved to be a fountainhead for several centuries of speculation. They found their way into poetry, dialogues, and many different forms of popular philosophical treatise of the sixteenth century, and their inspiration is evident in much of Renaissance literature.

What becomes clear from Allen's study is just how important Plotinus and Proclus were in Ficino's interpretation of Plato. Not yet able to make the modern distinction between Plato and Neoplatonism, Ficino interpreted the whole Platonic tradition as part of a unified and coherent philosophical world-view. Thus Plato was seen as more systematic, more mystical, and more prone to magical speculation than modern scholars, viewing him in a more rigorously historical fashion, will allow. Allen spells out precisely where such transformations are made. It should be remembered that in addition to his epoch-making translations of Plato, printed just five centuries ago, Ficino was also responsible for introducing the Latin world to Plotinus, Iamblichus and other ancient Neoplatonic authors unknown to the Middle Ages. There is also of course Hermes Trismegistus though Allen is less besotted by him than some other recent interpreters.

With Proclus the situation is more complex. His *Elements of Theology* were already known to Thomas Aquinas through William of Moerbeke's translation and had been subjected to careful attention by late medieval German Platonists such as Berthold of Mousburg; a tradition which fed into the work of Nicolas of Cusa. Ficino, however, came increasingly to grips with the voluminous, complex and often baffling writings of Proclus, the contents of which were also partially known through the works of Psoudo-Dionysius. Ficino gained access to a fairly broad range of Proclus' writings and read some of them very carefully, including the fundamental *Platonic Theology*. That work provided the title for Ficino's own major work, but did not itself appear in print until as late as 1618. The Florentine Platonist was thus heir to a ready-made framework for interpreting Plato, but one which had to be, at least partially, divested of ancient paganism before it could be made palatable to his Christian contemporaries. Ficino's result strikes one today as still rather pagan in orientation and intent, even though a theme such as metempsychosis is played down considerably and the panoply of pagan gods gets a somewhat metaphorical interpretation.

Allen's achievement, evident above all in this book, is twofold. First, he has been able to relate Ficino's writing more fully to Proclean sources than has previously been done. Second, he is able to isolate many metaphors, similes, and other literary devices – both in Ficino and in those who used him – which have escaped the attention of previous scholars. The present book is not easy going, but it is worth the effort. It shows Ficino, not as a great mind, but as one who could assimilate a great deal of learning and make it acceptable to many of his contemporaries and successors.

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A white dry-snow-cauldron Christmas

Peter Kemp

EMMA TENNANT
Black Marina
157pp. Faber. £8.95.
0571 13467 X

Bar-tenders should love Emma Tennant's new novel. Spilling over with instructions on how to prepare cocktails, it frequently reads like a manual for them. On the opening page, there's a recipe for rum punch: "Standard golden rum (as much as you like). Booster of white rum (watch out there). Grenada nutmeg (powl). Angostura bitters, the mythical concoction of gentian and other herbs and spices. Fruit juice (don't drown it)." A variant of this, "St James Christmas punch", is also served up: the rum has to be mixed with dried sorrel sepals that have been infused with cinnamon, cloves, sugar and orange peel ("Leave for two or three days and then strain"). Libations later itemized include a Green Velvet Special ("crème de menthe and coffee shaken up with cracked ice and a spot of orange bitters"), a Scorpion ("a white dry-snow-cauldron of rum and eggwhite and bitter-fresh limes"), and a Stinger Sundown (rustled together from vodka, Cointreau, Cinzano Rosé, angostura bitters and a twist of lemon).

In keeping with this concern with exotic concoctions, *Black Marina* is something of a cocktail itself. Pouring out a tale of rum doings in the Caribbean, it mixes into this a variety of ingredients Tennant also shook together in her last book, *Woman Beware Woman*. There, an untrustworthy narrator, travelling to Ireland, misleadingly recounted a story of violent death and mistaken identity. Here, things are strikingly similar. Once again, the narrator is deceptive; the setting is a politically troubled island; violent death and mistaken identity lie at the heart of it all. As in the earlier book, too, Tennant tops off this latest blend with her favourite garnish: a sour concluding twist.

Set on the Caribbean island of St James, only four miles from Grenada, *Black Marina* brims with references to political chicanery – from Marxist machinations to CIA infiltration. Drawn from second-hand sources – parallels with the 1983 invasion of Grenada are very copiously tapped – all this seems weak and stale, though. The strongest and freshest parts – sometimes pleasantly tangy – of *Black Marina*, in fact, are those which aren't concerned with the Caribbean in the 1980s at all, but with bitter-sweet memories of London in the 1960s. Holly Baker, the book's narrator, is a product of that era. In her element in swinging London, she has ill-advisedly left it to bar-hop her feckless way across the United States, and ended up managing a ramshackle store – "tins of Carnation milk and frozen shark steak in the fridge" – on the tiny island of St James. Here, still got up in hippie garb – thonged sandals, tinkling bangles, a faded caftan – she has torpidly become a kind of local landmark.

Around her, though, sprawls a world about to be blasted out of its calypso-and-coconut drowsiness into violent upheaval. Opening with the pastiche of a travel-brochure advertisement – all talk of tranquil lagoons, white beaches and "fabled spices" – the novel closes with a newspaper report of its brutal take-over by American marines. In between – confining her story to one Christmas Eve; throughout the afternoon, evening and night of which events escalate towards crisis – Tennant attempts to show how super-power intrigue and cynical ideologies have worked to undermine the island's picture-postcard calm.

The most authentic-seeming sections in the novel's account of happenings on St James are those which sardonically survey its vulgar tourist world: rich Americans tippling in what were once slave quarters; Sinatra tapes throbbing out under the paw-paw and mango trees. Nice incongruities are caught in Tennant's pictures of the Caribbean Christmas with its hibiscus and mistletoe, tinsel and sun-tan oil, plastic reindeers and swooping fruit bats. Attempting to penetrate deeper into the hinterland of the island than this flimsy overlay of hotels and marinas, though, the book merely blunders into a Gothic milieu of lush rottenness: Creole in-breeding, madness, incest, strawberry birthmarks, voodoo women and albino Negroes. Always easily lured into the melodramatic, Tennant plunges into it wholesale with her novel's concluding scenes, where too much comes to light too abruptly and in too unprepared-for a way. Her lurid disclosures about the decadent doings of the island's last feudal grandee and her panting intimations of international skulduggery are alike garishly stagey. Strained parallels with Shakespeare's late plays – for example, what is intended to be a shocking parody of the motif of reunion with a long-lost daughter – add to the unreal atmosphere. Increasingly highly coloured, *Black Marina* is infused with what Emma Tennant clearly hopes is strong stuff. But – unlike a novel such as Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm*, with which it has some very marked similarities – it never convincingly captures the rank flavour of Caribbean political ferment.

A fructicultural triangle

David Montrose

JOHN IRVING
The Cider House Rules
560pp. Cape. £8.95.
0224023365

John Irving's latest novel is built around the forty-year relationship, beginning in the early 1920s, between Dr Wilbur Larch, founder and director of St Cloud's Orphanage in the Maine backwoods, and his best-loved charge, Homer Wells, veteran of several failed adoptions, who spends his entire childhood and youth there. Among other things, Larch is an obstetrician, delivering unwanted, orphanage-bound babies. He also performs expert, and illegal, abortions ("He would deliver mothers, too"). Larch dreams that his favourite will eventually succeed him. For a while – as, under his guidance, Homer acquires considerable obstetric skill – the dream looks set for realization. Then Homer decides that he disapproves of abortion and does not want a medical career. He leaves St Cloud's to work on the coast, at Ocean View Orchards, where emotional complications unfold.

Homer strikes up a bosom friendship with the owner's son, Wally, and falls for Candy, Wally's sweetheart. Candy, for her part, comes to love both men. War intervenes. After Pearl Harbor, Wally joins the USAF. Homer, though, is unfit for military service due to a minor cardiac defect. (Unknown to him, the defect is fictitious: the protective Larch has falsified the orphanage's medical records.) While Homer undertakes fructicultural chores, Wally flies missions in South-east Asia. Next development: Wally is reported missing over the jungles of Burma. As hopes for his survival fade, Homer and Candy become lovers, with the natural consequences. A marriage, especially a shotgun marriage, close upon Wally's disappearance is unthinkable. So Homer plots a deception: they will go to St Cloud's, ostensibly to help out; Candy will give birth there; they will marry and return to Ocean View, having supposedly adopted an orphan. But between the arrival of a son, Angel, and the intended marriage, news is received that Wally has been found alive, albeit paralysed in both legs (though unimpaired sexually) and, it later transpires, sterile. Marriage plans abandoned, they await his return. Larch, meanwhile, far from relinquishing his dream, has been ensuring by shady means that nothing will bar Homer's succession should he ever change his mind.

The narrative now jumps fifteen years. During the intervening period, the main characters' lives have changed little. Candy and Wally are married, but the eternal triangle remains unbroken, while Angel is unaware of his parentage. Subsequently, though, events proceed to a chain of climaxes. Larch dies as the result of ether addiction; Wally and Angel learn the truth and are unresentful; Homer assumes control of St Cloud's, where, in days to come, he will be visited regularly by Wally, Candy and Angel.

The late John Gardner identified Irving as an exponent of the "moral fiction" he espoused. *The Cider House Rules* is his most overtly didactic novel yet. Its overriding concern is with codes of conduct and the right of self-determination. The rules of the title are meant to apply to the behaviour of the black migrant workers who visit Ocean View during apple-picking. In fact, the migrants ignore them, living (and dying) by their own serviceable code. Another juxtaposition of written rules and unwritten conventions is at the heart of the novel and facilitates a blow at America's New Right. In America, the reader learns, until nineteenth-century legislation changed matters, abortion was deemed acceptable before movements of the foetus could be felt. Larch upholds tradition, offering women the choice, forbidden by law, which he considers their right. His aim is to provide a skilled alternative to backstreet incompetents. Though still disapproving, Homer finally arrives at a similar position. Only when abortion is legalized, and skilled attention widely obtainable, will he stop performing the operation. By the concluding chapter, of course, that time is near. The arguments are, if familiar, powerfully dramatized. The drawback is that while differing over the morality, both Larch and Homer regard abortion as a matter of personal choice; no champion of the contrary view emerges. Irving is not, to be sure, obliged to present both sides of the question, but his failure to do so passes up an opportunity for productive conflict. Instead, Larch's adversary – the law – is unsatisfactorily disembodied.

Several years ago, Irving complained in an essay that "to the modern reader, too often when a writer risks being sentimental, the writer is already guilty". Irving, of course, took that risk in this novel's tragi-comic predecessors, *The World According to Garp* and *The Hotel New Hampshire*. Each time, he beat the rap by combining sentiment, in Dickensian fashion, with grotesque humour. Here, though, greater risks are run. Odd flashes apart, the comedy is far gentler; hearts of gold abound, while bad hats are few and frequently ineffectual. Fortunately, the outcome is usually affecting rather than sugary: schmaltz is largely confined to the portrayal of Ocean View's romantic triad, which Irving nowhere invests with the authenticity shown in *The 158-Pound Marriage*, his account of a sexual foursome. Irving hoped that *Garp* would appeal to both the "tough-minded" and the "softer hearts". On this occasion, the former are likely to be less taken than the latter.

GAVIN LYALL
The Crocus List
288pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0 340 37260 5

The Crocus List is Gavin Lyall's third novel about Major Harry Maxim, Whitehall's not too tame Army officer. A new government has come in; as a result Maxim has left Downing Street and been attached to the Directorate of Crisis Relocation – a department which has the job of moving VIPs and suchlike out of London if anything disastrous does occur. Which is why he happens to be standing outside Westminster Abbey with three Saracen armoured cars and a sub-machine gun when someone tries to assassinate the US President, who is attending a memorial service inside. Maxim, unravelling the plot with the assistance of his old friends George Harbinger and Agnes Algar, crosses swords with the KGB in the Cotswolds and Illinois, investigates the CIA in New York and Eastbourne, and risks his neck for the Anglican church in East Berlin. This is undoubtedly the best Harry Maxim yet. Brilliantly engineered and written with functional elegance, it moves forward with the irresistible power of a Tiger tank, and with the acceleration of a bobsleigh going down the Cresta run. The sole blemish is that the author believes graffiti to be a singular noun.

T. J. Binyon

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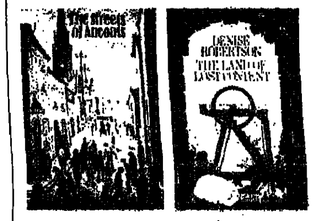

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Systems for living

Andrew Saint

GILBERT HERBERT
The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann
470pp. MIT Press. £25.25.
0 262 08140 7

In the popular perception of architecture, "prefabrication" is one of the dirtier words in current use. It has not always been so. When it first caught on in Britain after the last war to denote the 100,000-odd dwellings rapidly erected to combat the shortage of housing, labour and building materials, the term "prefab" attracted its share of social snobbery and suspicion. But there was broad enthusiasm for its potential. The vision, championed by prophets like H. G. Wells, scientists like J. D. Bernal, architects like Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann, and technologists like Buckminster Fuller and Jean Prouvé, of no mere new style of architecture but a complete new way of building – light, fast, flexible, demountable, unoppressive, and less brutal to the building worker – seemed on the verge of fulfilment. Forty years and several million prefabricated units later that enthusiasm has been dissipated, except among a handful of architects and technologists who keep faith and work on, convinced that we shall soon again have seriously to face the issue of "rational building".

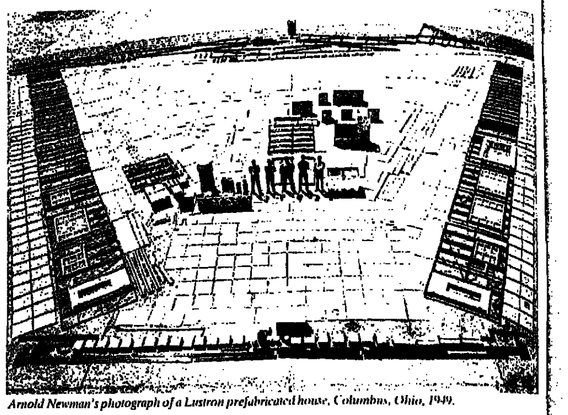
Why the disillusionment? The question is a big one, bigger even than that of the rise and decline of the Modern Movement. For lack of good histories of the building history or of building economics over the past half-century, the best that can be done by way of answer is to turn to case-studies like Gilbert Herbert's new book. In its predecessor, *Pioneers of Prefabrication* (1978), Herbert revealed how far the Victorian building industry in Britain had gone in the production of prefabricated buildings, far beyond the oft-cited Crystal Palace and the "great sheds" of railway stations to a whole range of iron buildings for export. It was a reminder that prefabrication is nothing new. A brick and a nail, theorists of the subject often remark, are prefabricated components, having been "developed" over the ages to the point of near-perfection in weight, shape and durability.

What happened in the twentieth century, put crudely, was that the rate of change in building technology increased so rapidly as to create an awareness of opportunities for controlling and directing the changes towards certain far-reaching purposes, social, aesthetic and technical. Prefabrication, in other words, having evolved fairly naturally along with the building industry, was now forced, like a hot-house plant tended by over-eager amateur gardeners. Wells was one such early amateur. Witnessing with impatience and incredulity the tardy growth of a house designed for him by Voysey, he began dreaming of "sound, portable and habitable houses of felted wire-netting and weather-proofed paper upon a light framework", and of "much more revolutionary affairs, of a thing running to and fro along a temporary rail, that will squeeze out wall as one squeezes paint from a tube, and form its surface with a pat or two as it sets".

The Dream of the Factory-Made House starts with a visionary memorandum of 1910 on the industrial production of buildings sent by Walter Gropius to Emil Rathenau, head of the great German manufacturing combine AEG, and goes on to take the story of Gropius's involvement in prefabrication through to its climax (or anti-climax) in the General Panel house. This was a system of great sophistication produced with high hopes in the United States from 1947 onwards but built in the end in pitifully small numbers. By no stretch of imagination could Gropius's attitude towards prefabrication be called amateurish. Gilbert Herbert indeed contends that Gropius stood apart from most others involved in the search for the factory-made house because of his ability to synthesize, to grasp the complex and continuous relations between design, research, production, programme and housing policy which were vital for success. It was Gropius who, in the Rathenau memorandum of 1910 and subsequent papers, established a theory of prefabrication which avoided too facile an analogy with other types of industrial production. Glibber enthusiasts wanted to see the mass methods of the American production line applied in building – the car and the aeroplane are the examples constantly cited. Gropius advocated progress by combining standardized components of co-ordinated dimensions in a variety of ways rather than by producing complete buildings or parts of buildings. This is the philosophy which has since lain behind all responsible attempts at permanent prefabricated buildings.

Yet Gropius lacked the opportunity to put these ideas into practice on the large scale sufficient to give them the seal of authority. The burden of Herbert's tale shows that individuals alone cannot secure the necessary coincidence of good ideas, opportunity and continuity in prefabricated housing. A first chance came in Britain after the First World War, when the Homes fit for Heroes policy, sometimes with sharp inflation in the cost of traditional building called forth a range of prefabricated house-designs for mass-production, mostly in concrete. All were devised by engineers and builders, and were thefore better geared to the convenience of the producer and erector than of the user. They had technical faults which might have been righted. But before that could happen their production had virtually ceased because of changes in housing policy and because the hoped-for economies of scale had not materialized – hard lessons which were to recur again and again in the annals of prefabrication.

From Britain the focus of attention shifted to Germany. The centre of Herbert's book is taken up with the fortunes of prefabrication under the Weimar Republic. Not until then did architects begin first to think systematically about the subject, particularly young architects of radical and modernizing sympathies. Most, like Gropius himself, were outsiders who wished to convert industry to their ideas, but a few, notably Konrad Wachsmann, a pupil of Hans Poelzig employed by Christoph and Unmack, the largest prefabricators of wooden buildings in Europe, worked directly for manufacturers. Wachsmann indeed designed a neat, unpretentious wooden house for Albert Einstein at Potsdam in 1929. During the 1920s many prototypes were constructed, a few systems went into production, and a concrete-panel method of building helped to keep Frankfurt's great housing programme on schedule. Much technical progress was made in the design of two types of steel housing (*Stahlamellenbau*, in which the steel panels act as both structure and cladding, and the more prophetic *Stahlskelettsbau*, in which a framework of steel is covered by other materials) as well as in prefabricated wooden housing (*Holzhausbau*), long traditional in Germany and Scandinavia. But the gap between industry and architecture remained.



Arnold Newman's photograph of a Lustron prefabricated house, Columbus, Ohio, 1949.

Interestingly, the collapse of the German economy in 1929–30 did not end experiments with prefabricated housing straight away. The housing drive was sustained a little beyond the contraction of industrial demand, and one reaction of manufacturers faced with short order books was to diversify into the housing market. Thus Gropius's most intensive episode in designing for prefabrication came in 1931–2, when he worked on a copper-clad house-type for mass-production by the ailing giant Hirsch Kupfer und Messingwerke. As was his wont, Gropius tried to control the project absolutely, but to little avail; at the end of 1932 Hirsch Kupfer collapsed, beset by political and economic chaos. As usual, few of these houses were actually built. But there followed a bizarre episode whereby a handful of these and other German prefabricated houses were exported to Palestine by emigrating Jews in the early Nazi period. Forbidden to take funds with them under currency restrictions, they agreed to buy German export goods instead, among them prefabricated houses. These Herbert has tracked down to back lots in Haifa and Tel Aviv where, he thinks, their appearance combined with the influx of émigré architects had some bearing on the character of Israel's cities.

Gropius and Wachsmann were among the émigrés, though not to Palestine. They first met in 1934 as exiles in Split. In 1941, the established Harvard Professor Gropius welcomed the penniless wanderer Wachsmann to his home, where the latter pulled out from among his few possessions drawings for a brilliant new system in *Holzhausbau*, the product of lucubrations over the grim preceding years. This was the origin of the General Panel house. In wartime America, with state intervention in housing at its peak, it seemed to have a future, and Gropius helped Wachsmann get it into marketable form. But Wachsmann, a genius at joints, proved to be a poor businessman, more intent on technical perfection than on the practical successes that this kind of flexible prefabrication so badly needed. Valuable chances were wasted, and by the time that backing had been secured and the General Panel Corporation commenced production in its automated Burbank factory in 1947, Roosevelt's National Housing Agency was being wound down and subsidies for housing systems were on the wane. No more than 200 General Panel houses were built, and the corporation went quickly into liquidation. The same happened to the Lustron steel-panelled house, a larger but less sophisticated venture of the same years. Without the guarantee of a market, the cause of a more rational method of house-building could never get into the position to prove itself. But the technical influence and reputation of the General Panel system have persisted; the 3' 4' dimension to which many post-war British schools and other buildings were designed, for instance, derives directly from Wachsmann's wartime work.

Herbert unfolds this story with care and clarity. At all stages he is at pains to put over the complexities which the successful designer of prefabricated building must face and overcome. Since his book explores only one strand in the modern history of prefabrication, it is sometimes unclear how important that strand was in the whole. This is a constant problem: the record of applied technology; it is easier to isolate and applaud innovation than to discover the extent of "take-up" or to judge it in relation to less ambitious but perhaps more successful and realistic alternatives. In the cold light of the end-products, Herbert's unstinting admiration for Gropius and Wachsmann seems too strong. To have thought so long and hard about a problem and to have achieved so little that lasted suggests some basic misconstructions, even allowing for the shattering political hiatus in the midst of their careers.

Some would conclude from this sorry saga that architects, inventors and policy-makers should not meddle with prefabrication in building, which can be left to develop at its own rate. That would be quite wrong, and is why this book is an important one. Prefabrication in the building supplies industry continues to advance apace, and its force is all the more dangerous when left uncontrolled in the hands of builders and manufacturers. To revert to the reasons for its unpopularity, nothing damaged the repute of prefabricated housing more than the favours bestowed by governments all over the world between 1955 and 1975 upon builders' systems of high-rise, heavy-panel concrete construction which were insufficiently tested, very inflexible, and geared to methods of construction rather than easy maintenance. By contrast, where policy-makers, architects and clients have been united in the control of new systems of construction, as in the British post-war school-building programmes, prefabrication proved an outstanding help in getting quantities of modest but imaginative buildings quickly, economically and justly built. Herbert does not mention this because he writes only about housing, perhaps the most resistant of all types of building to successful innovation, but it was an achievement which Gropius acknowledged and admired. Prefabrication is with us to stay, no longer perhaps in the "closed" systems with a limited vocabulary of components like General Panel, but in the healthier "open" systems allowing greater variety and interchangeability of components. Only by broader and less emotive discussion of this subject can we hope to master it. Gilbert Herbert's book is a step in that direction.

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From travellers to tourists

David Pryce-Jones

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238pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press. £14.95.
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VICTOR AZARYA
The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban life behind monastery walls
252pp. University of California Press. £20.70.
0 520 04747 4

Early in the nineteenth century, a visit to the Holy Land acquired Grand Tour cachet. Biblical sites had shaped civilization as formatively as classical ruins, and it was more of an adventure to reach them, by boat to Jaffa, riding overland with guides afterwards. An enormous literature exists in which a fascinating variety of Europeans and Americans recorded impressions of their journey in this emotionally charged province of the Ottoman empire, focusing as a rule on Jerusalem and its holy places. Virtually all of them could not help being unfavourably struck by the contrast between the city's spiritual associations and its actual drowsy squalor. Martin Gilbert bases himself upon this literature to portray Jerusalem and its growth between 1838 and 1898. He keeps close to chronology. And why these odd dates? Because here was a rare span of peace and enrichment, in hindsight quite a golden age.

In 1838, 6,000 Jews lived in the city along with 5,000 Muslim Arabs and 3,000 Christian Arabs. The Turkish governor and his soldiers maintained law and order, but not over the Bedouin tribes outside the walls. Two of the most popular books of the day, Robert Curzon's *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* and Kinglake's *Eothen*, then publicized how Arabs and Jews alike had sunk into pitiful poverty, and that the Christian sites were a subject of scandal. Officials, churchmen, missionaries, archaeologists, responded. On this historic terrain there duly began another phase in the protracted struggle between East and West, or in cultural rather than nationalistic terms, between immemorial custom and progress.

In a far-sighted move, a party of Royal Engineers in 1841 surveyed Jerusalem and its surroundings for military purposes. Opportunity for influence came about in a different and more unexpected way. Jews escaping to Palestine from Russia were deprived of their citizenship; stateless, uncertainly tolerated by the Turks, they turned for protection to England. The establishment in 1846 of a British consulate and an Anglican bishopric marked a shift of power in the region.

Consul Finn is one of the book's dominant characters. Buying land at Talbiyeh outside the walls, he was the first to build on the bare hills. So great was his urge to own property that he borrowed from Jews money which he had difficulty in repaying. Consul Finn visualized the conversion of the Jews as part of his duties – Bishop Gobat preferred to concentrate on his Arab Christian congregation. That conversions might be self-serving seems not to have bothered the rather innocent-minded consul. Under British patronage there grew a plethora of missionary and tract societies, as well as the Bible-oriented Palestine Exploration Fund, schools and orphanages, with the accompanying kindly ladies who knew what was best for Arabs and Jews, and accordingly sowed dragon's teeth. The converts, a strange assortment of prodigies and renegades, exercised consular skills to the full. The way was prepared for ill-feelings and confessional disturbances to come.

The outcome of the Crimean war encouraged the French to stake their presence as sponsors of the Latins. Prussia and Austria established their institutions, and so finally did Russia, feared and hated though it was, claiming to speak for the Orthodox churches and to protect the thousands of annual Orthodox pilgrims. A series of maps reveals how these international rivalries were expressed more and more intensely in each decade in the shape of new buildings, hospitals, post-offices, churches and monasteries. Religious edifices, confident and resplendent in local limestone, and still such a feature of Jerusalem, were sited on supposedly biblical spots, with or without benefit of authenticity. Scores of photographs, many of them dating back to the 1860s, aptly illustrate these developments, and comprise a valuable collection from numerous sources.

Christian energies had repercussions on the Jewish community. A few Jews were craftsmen or artisans but the majority depended on charity raised precariously abroad. New arrivals added to the general impoverishment. Men like the philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore, Heinrich Graetz, the historian, Simon von Laemel, the Austrian industrialist, reacted against torpor and obscurantism in their fellow-Jews, and stimulated all forms of self-help and education. Inevitably conflict arose between those willing to modernize through new channels and the more orthodox who resisted change. European observers who were not Jewish could note the obvious distinction between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, but they missed the subterranean and perhaps more crucial disputes brought about by the encounter with secularism. Quotations from Jewish travellers and settlers, mostly Russian or Polish in origin, some of them emancipated and even converted, bring to life this theme which still troubles Jerusalem.

Evolution among the Arabs is less well documented. In the Haram ash-Sharif they had the most impressive site in the city. Unbelievers were not allowed past the Sudanese guards, until an exception was made in 1855 for the eldest son of King Leopold of the Belgians. Afterwards, for no very discernible reason, sight-seeing in the Haram became accepted practice. Mosques, minarets and whole Arab quarters were built in the 1870s and 1880s, keeping pace with other communities.

Accumulated details and anecdotes tellingly bring to life all sorts of people, known and unknown. Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Crown Prince Rudolph, Lamartine, are among those with walk-on parts. Prince George, later George V, was tattooed on the arm by the very same man who twenty years previously had tattooed his father, himself the Prince of Wales at the time. An American dragoman, improbably called Rolla Floyd, described how the Bedouin set about robbing parties of the kind he led. A boy by the name of Joseph Meyuhas would write the Song of Songs complete on egg-shells which he sold to travellers. Another boy fell into Hezekiah's Pool and so discovered an inscription concerning the tunnelling which is the longest single document in classical Hebrew. In 1898 Kaiser Wilhelm rode into the city through a breach opened in the walls for him. Later he made disparaging remarks to Theodore Herzl who had come to meet him. By then, the train service to Jaffa ran daily, the telegraph was laid and the roads metalled, and travellers had turned into tourists. An expanded Jerusalem comprised 28,000 Jews, 8,600 Muslims and 8,760 Christian Arabs and Europeans, for all of whom the old-style Ottoman past was rapidly becoming as unimaginable as the future.

In the Old City is the Armenian Quarter, a walled enclave of great charm around the Monastery of St James; in its present form some four centuries old but with roots in the earliest years of Christianity. The Armenian patriarch is titular head of a community of some hundred priests and seminarists. Within the monastery compound also live fifteen hundred tenants, all Armenian and lay people. *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem* is a sociological study of this whole community, though it includes two wider chapters on Armenian history. The architecture and the social organization of the monastery perpetuate the Armenian identity. What particularly earns Victor Azarya's approval is the interaction of the religious and the lay, to create what he calls "a defended neighbourhood".

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Disappearing tricks

Dick Wilson

CLARE HOLLINGWORTH
Mao and the Men Against Him
372pp. Cape. £16.
0224017608

Clare Hollingworth's long-awaited account of recent Chinese politics, loosely hung about the career of Mao Zedong, makes two things very clear. The first is the appalling secretiveness with which the Chinese burden their public life, always to their disadvantage. The second is the fearfully low-calibre leadership which China has produced in modern times.

During the disgrace in 1976 of the present senior power-holder, Deng Xiaoping, our author (the *Daily Telegraph*'s China correspondent) tried to buy a press photograph of him with Premier Zhou Enlai's widow taken during the Communist Party Congress three years earlier. The Xinhua News Agency official behind the counter insisted not only that there was no such picture, but that "no one of the name Deng Xiaoping has ever existed". As for that world-famous scene in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in October, 1949, when the People's Republic was proclaimed, "almost all the press photographs taken during the ceremony are no longer available", Miss Hollingworth reports. The sales were initially stopped during the Cultural Revolution after the purge of Mao's "chosen successor" Liu Shaoqi, and then fully destroyed on Central Committee orders after the attempted coup d'état of Lin Biao, the Chairman's second "chosen successor", in 1971.

It was only human for Mao to feel embarrassed at appearing in photographs to be on the best of terms with two men who later turned against him. But it is a curious use of public energies to seek to eradicate evidence which has already been replicated by the thousand. Photographs are sometimes used positively, as when Mao's wife revealed to other Party leaders for the first time that he was in serious dispute with his Defence Minister, Lin Biao, by circulating a snapshot which she had taken revealing his bald head – about which he was extremely sensitive, always keeping it covered.

How is a citizen supposed to act in a society which deals thus with facts? Anyone indulging in romantic ideas about life in China should consider how to deal with a situation where, for example, a Chairman of the Republic is stripped naked, beaten up and hounded from office largely on the basis of allegations made by his daughter who, ten years later, renounced her entire story.

This book has fun with Lin Biao, who stopped washing with soap in order to retain his natural skin oils, and later carried his naturist eccentricities to keeping out of the sunlight "and, more objectionable to those near to him, a reluctance at times to use a lavatory". The hapless Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua is described marching around Tiananmen Square shouting slogans against Deng Xiaoping – and is later seen, according to Western diplomatic sources, vainly asking Andrei Gromyko at the United Nations in New York for Russian assistance in the Gang of Four's taking power in China.

As for Mao himself, there is a litany of misunderstandings. He did not draw the right conclusion about decolonization, he misread Japan's post-war development, he was caught by surprise by South-east Asia's taking up capitalism, etc. One of the best vignettes is his reception of Edward Heath in 1974. He berated Premier Zhou Enlai for not receiving Heath in the style of a head of state, whereupon Zhou patiently explained that the Queen was Head of State and that Britain's Prime Minister was Harold Wilson, who would be offended if Heath were so elaborately treated. "The Chairman then grew excited and said he did not give a Chinese four-letter word what Mr Wilson said or thought . . . ". In the end, Heath was "treated like an emperor".

With leaders so naive, so insecure and mistrustful, so eager to demean themselves for political survival, it is, perhaps, no surprise to find foreigners at times taking an extraordinarily prominent part in Chinese politics. How did it come about, Hollingworth asks, that the American journalist Sidney Rittenberg came into complete control of Peking Radio during August 1967, or that British and other Western radical residents were to the fore in the disgraceful episode of the burning of the British Embassy?

Miss Hollingworth is a very just reporter. She says more than once that she disbelieves the rumours about Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, having affairs with leading young sportsmen. At the height of that evil woman's notoriety, Hollingworth says, "I realised she was power-hungry and unscrupulous but I had no idea how evil she really was, although many people secretly tried to present to me a true picture of her." But how is an observer expected to come to a satisfactory judgment on such a matter? Hollingworth recounts the stories that young men taking her fancy were summoned to Jiang Qing's couch for the evening, but she doubts them because she feels that such "goings on" would have been mentioned at her trial. There is, however, the possibility that such things were true, but were not publicly bandied about at the trial in order not to lower the image of political life or state affairs. Hollingworth does accept the story (coming from a young painter who served them throughout this period) that Jiang and her friends enjoyed pornographic films after dinner.

Much of what is said in this book has to rest upon assumption, the outstanding example being the supposed death of Lin Biao in an air-crash in Mongolia. The fact that some people saw him driving to the airport at Beijing is not enough to confirm this story beyond all doubt. And sometimes the author uses inappropriate evidence to make her points. Why quote Dennis Bloodworth, for example, for something which Mao said to Edgar Snow and which is published in one of Snow's books?

There are mistakes, too. Zhou Enlai did not remain in Hongkong "for a year or two" after the failure of the Nanchang uprising in 1927, nor did the Russians withdraw their experts in 1956. One of the photographs of whose withdrawal Hollingworth complains appears in her book wrongly captioned, promising Liu Shaoqi but showing somebody else. And there are too many misprints, especially towards the end of the book.

This is also the Clare Hollingworth who was such an outstanding war correspondent, and it is hard to fault her enterprise, whether in locating a restaurant off the rue du Louvre in Paris, a former (pre-Mao) husband of Jiang Qing, or discovering the extraordinary Shanghai liftboy who claims to remember, fifty years afterwards, Noël Coward's stay there when he was writing *Private Lives*. But the most moving snapshot is of the woman intellectual who told Hollingworth how, in the early 1970s, she and her husband somehow acquired a bottle of French wine and, on their wedding anniversary, when the children and the neighbours were asleep, "they took out his dinner jacket and her long evening dress, which were stored under the floorboards, and by candlelight they enjoyed a European dinner". They were taking a big risk, Hollingworth notes, "for if they had been discovered, they would certainly have been sent to different unpleasant agricultural communes on the Russian border".

Kingsley Aimisi to Seamus Xini

W. J. F. Jenner

Zhongguo Da Baike Quanshu: Waiguo Wenxue
1,303 pp (two volumes). Peking and Shanghai: Zhongguo Da Baike Quanshu Chubanshe (Great Chinese Encyclopaedia Publishing House).

Imagine what it must have been like for China's intellectuals when all of a sudden the literature of the rest of the world stopped being forbidden territory. For over ten years during and after the "cultural revolution" virtually none had been available, and there had not been much in the decade before that. The limited range of approved foreign writers up till about 1964 had been the Stalinist one in which, for example, English literature of the twentieth century was represented by Galsworthy and the great modern French writer was Romain Rolland. After 1964 even that narrow range had contracted until almost everything foreign, like most of what was Chinese, had been condemned as feudal, bourgeois, revisionist or any combination of these. Books were thrown into bonfires by Red Guards, sold for pulping, or – at great risk – hidden.

When the gates were cautiously opened at the end of 1978 and it became possible to translate and publish at least some work by almost any writer of significance, there were not many editors, translators or readers who had much idea about what was worth bothering with, especially from the present century. Even the older intellectuals were sadly out of touch. Before this section – *Waiguo Wenxue* (Foreign Literature) – of the *Great Chinese Encyclopaedia* came out there was no general reference book to which eager readers could turn for basic information that would enable them to sort out the various writers called Gelin (Graham, Julien, Henry, Robert, and the German brothers who collected fairy tales and share the same name in Chinese). There had been some rather old-fashioned literary histories of the sort that went up to the 1930s at the latest in which you could learn about the Bolangte sisters, but one needs this book to be able to find out not only about them (Charlotte and Emily have their own entries, though not Anne) but also about the two American writers Mile (Arthur the dramatist who is approved of, and Henry the novelist who is disgusting) and the Englishman Evelyn Wo and P. G. Wodehaosi (whose creations Boti Wusite and Jifusi are singled out for mention).

Readers had an urgent need for help, and in meeting that need quickly these two volumes have done a good job. Not because they reach the heights of scholarship and mature critical judgment – they do not – but because the editors and contributors were not afraid to offer individual opinions.

Conventional academic wisdom would have allowed much longer for the study of foreign literature in China to recover from the ravages of twenty years of devastating political campaigns before starting on so ambitious a project. The older scholars who had wanted to open their compatriots' eyes to other literatures, other cultures and other views of the world had been persecuted and cut off from their work for one or two decades, and the younger scholars were necessarily ill-informed. Common sense would have reinforced professional caution in warning the victims of yesterday's xenophobia not to draw attention to themselves in case the politics of collective hysteria come back tomorrow.

Instead the editors decided to go for speed. The 3.5 million characters of the entries, equivalent to some 2.5 million words of English, were ready for press only a year after the project had been started. By any publishing standards that is fast work, particularly as this whole encyclopaedia is completely new (which is why it is being brought out in subject volumes first) and there was no existing Chinese work to base it on. Signs of haste are not hard to find, but no matter. It was much more important to get this badly needed book out quickly than to produce a monument of scholarship.

It was not just that readers needed the information. There was another, and more profound significance, in China's leading specialists and institutions in this field moving with the speed that they did. Seeing an opening up in the limits of the permissible around 1980, they chose to align themselves with the enlightened tendency in the country's political life while the battle against the would-be restorers of old orthodoxies was still undecided. By signing articles on controversial foreign writers, including some living ones, which did not always hide behind safe platitudes or carefully avoid judgments, the contributors and editors were setting a lead.

The right to be wrong is essential to any intellectual life worth speaking of, and it is for not being afraid of being thought to have made "political mistakes" – the English conveys but little of the sinister connotations of the Chinese – that the people responsible for this book most deserve to be honoured. Nor did they make a pointless gesture. Their book stayed on the shelves of bookshops through the nonsense of the recent campaign against "spiritual pollution", and it stands as proof that Chinese intellectuals are not always cautious.

But what of the book's quality as a work of reference? As far as the articles go, they vary enormously; and some very odd decisions about format seem to have been imposed. For example, the only way in which an author can be located is by the romanized alphabetical order of the pronunciation of the Chinese characters by which his or her name is represented. There is no index in any script but Chinese. So the Chinese user who wants to find out about Mario Vargas Llosa has to know that the name to look up is Ba'erjiasi Luesa; Wordsworth *frère* lurks under the disguise of Huazihuasi (and Dorothy is only mentioned in passing). It may be amusing to find entries on John Updike, Anders Osterling, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Max and Pedro Henriquez Urena and Quintus Ennius in alphabetical sequence in their standard sinified forms, but imagine trying to look any of these authors up.

Such minor irritations apart, there is much of value in the book. The articles themselves are a delightfully mixed bag. William Bulaike, for example, is given a rather crude Marxist treatment; but while D. H. Laolunsi is chided for failing to understand doctrine, a surprisingly strong defence of *Lady Chatterley* is quite free of the priggishness that some Chinese critics adopt when dealing with sexual matters in literature. A much more old-fashioned approach is found in some, but not all, of the entries on Soviet writers. A. I. Suo'erenigin, for example, gets a very straightforward factual article that leaves those who might have no chance of reading *The First Circle* or *The Gulag Archipelago* for themselves with the knowledge that these books denounce the "inhumanly cruel rule" of the Soviet penal system in Stalin's era. Mikhail Bu'erjiakefu, however, is handled very cautiously: "the consistent tendency of his work to expose the dark side of society was criticized" is the careful non-verdict on the author of *The Master and Margarita*. The same Soviet official style can be seen in the short article on Boris Pasijie'ernake, which refers to the "severe criticism" of *Doctor Zhivago* but says nothing of other views of its quality and denounces his final collection of poetry.

The articles on Western writers tend to be more or less in line with the sort of views to be found in reference books, subject to more and sometimes much less political adjustment. Camus and Sartre are both rather sympathetically presented; the former's views on Algeria, for example, are passed over in silence, as are his differences with Communists. Nor are readers warned off Sartre, despite the strong disapproval of him in official circles. George Aowei'er's participation in the Spanish civil war is simply described as fighting on the government side, with no abusive attacks on him; and while *Animal Farm* (a book that by a delightful mistake was on sale in Peking's Foreign Language Bookshop in 1963, at the height of the Mao era) is said to mock the Soviet social system, *Nineteen Eighty-four* is not presented as an anti-Communist novel.

There is, not surprisingly, a tendency to be rather out of date, to go up to the mid-1960s rather than the 1980s. This can largely be blamed on the break of ten years or so in the work of foreign literature specialists because of the cultural revolution. So the English novel goes up to Kingsley Aimisi, *A Dance to the Music of Time* (highly recommended), Iris Moduoke and Margaret Delajbu'er; the young Irish poet is Seamus Xini.

One can also note a certain *pudeur*. Readers are not told about Wilde, Gide or Pasolini's sexual tendencies, though there is a veiled hint about Wilde's arrest and imprisonment resulting from "indiscretion in his private life". Is it really too soon for Chinese readers to be told that a man can be a good writer and a homosexual?

Forceful foursomes

Jorge Calado

CHRISTINE SUTTON
The Particle Connection
176pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
0091558905
ALWYN McKAY
The Making of the Atomic Age
153pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50 (paperback, £3.95).
0192191934

The crest of scientific excitement has shifted from one discipline to another across the years. At the end of the nineteenth century physics was thought to be a closed (and thus dead) subject, the thriving science then being chemistry. There remained but two small questions in physics – "clouds" to use Lord Kelvin's expression: the problem of the ether and the radiation of hot bodies. The discovery of X-rays and radioactivity changed all that, and the two "clouds" ushered in the storms of relativity and quantum mechanics. The first forty years of this century were dominated by the new physics and the wonders of the atom, but the glamour of nuclear physics subsided in the wake of the atomic bomb, and biochemistry emerged as the exciting and fashionable science, a position which it has held up to the present day.

With genetic engineering now raising serious ethical problems, the time has, perhaps, come for physics – high energy physics, to be more specific – to reaffirm its supremacy. In *The Particle Connection* Christine Sutton goes a long way to show us why. One's heart sinks at the realization that she begins her story with *Homo sapiens* a good 35,000 years ago, but 150 pages later her prose has already become so embroiled in technical data and scientific jargon that it throbs with the jazzy rhythms of William Burroughs. That the reader is carried willingly along on this journey is no mean proof of Dr Sutton's accomplishments and enthusiasm as a popularizer of science. The path followed by Alwyn McKay in *The Making of the Atomic Age* is more linear and straightforward. Helped by accessible diagrams he traces the developments in nuclear physics which led to "the release and harnessing of the immense energy locked in the nucleus of an atom", and thus to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the possibilities of the fast-breeder reactors of today. His is the vision of a scientist who firmly believes that science is good and that its problems are tractable without ever becoming complacent about the dangers.

The calm wisdom of Dr McKay contrasts sharply with Sutton's ebullience. It would be good to report that *The Particle Connection* does for the new particles W and Z what James Watson's *The Double Helix* did for DNA, but it falls well short of that. Sutton Conveys some of the excitement and ruthlessness of the race towards a major scientific discovery, but as an outsider she inevitably misses the drama and the human weaknesses of the participants. This is a story of magic numbers, symmetry groups, [illegible]sive particles and grand unifying schemes – [illegible] world of physics in a nutshell.

The story goes back to the Greeks and to the four-element theory of Empedocles – all matter being described in terms of the different contributions of earth, water, air and fire (the three states of matter plus an energy-transforming agent) interacting by love and strife. Modern physics too has been fond of the number four, and, for a while, in the late 1920s, it seemed that all atoms could be built from four fundamental particles – proton, neutron, electron and neutrino; but by the mid 1960s literally hundreds of (mostly unstable) particles had been observed or created in the laboratory. In a book that he co-authored with Jung, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*, Wolfgang Pauli was pleased to note that his own Exclusion Principle had increased the number of quantum parameters necessary to define the state of an electron, from three to the archetypical number of four. And there are, of course four different types of forces: gravitational, electromagnetic, weak (governing the laws of disintegration) and strong (keeping the nucleus together).

Order was slowly restored, however, when Gell-Mann and Yuval Ne'eman began to classify the particles according to certain symmetric patterns, and used the mathematics of symmetry groups to work out transformations between particles. The link between elementary components of matter and symmetrical organization is as old as geometry itself. Philolaos of Terentum had associated the four elements with the regular solids, and since these are five, the dodecahedron was kicked upwards to the sphere of the stars and became identified, for Plato, with another invisible element, the substance of heavenly bodies or quintessence. The breakthrough came in 1964 when Gell-Mann and Zweig interpreted the original Ne'eman and Gell-Mann model by suggesting that particles like the proton and neutron (hadrons in general) are composite, ie, made up of smaller units, called quarks. (Electrons and neutrinos, which belong to another family of particles called leptons, seem to be elementary in the real sense and are not made of quarks.)

Like atoms at the turn of the century, quarks were thought at first to be figments of the imagination or, at best, mathematical artifices. Although they have not been observed in isolation, their presence can be felt in much the same way that Rutherford felt the compact nucleus when bombarding the atom with alpha-particles. At first there appeared to be three (or four) types of quarks. Today we know that they come in six "flavours", each one with three varieties of "colour" (red, green and blue) – up, down, strange, charm, bottom (or beauty) and top (or truth) quarks, this last discovered only in July 1984, although it had long been predicted. "Colour" is the source of the strong force which keeps the quarks together. Its analogue in electromagnetism is the electric charge. Likewise protons, which are the particle carriers of the electromagnetic field, have gluons as their counterpart in the strong field.

In the unified "electroweak" theory of Weinberg, Salam and Glashow the carriers of the weak force are three particles or weak photons, W^+, W^- and Z°. Because the range of action of the weak force is very short (roughly the size of the nucleus, unlike that of the electromagnetic force, which spreads for as long a range as possible) the weak photons should be quite heavy (normal photons are massless). The quest for these particles, vividly recounted in *The Particle Connection*, is one of the glories of contemporary physics. Very high energies, generated by the collision of matter with antimatter, were necessary to produce such heavy particles, but the herculean efforts were finally rewarded at the end of 1982 when out of 1,000 million collisions emerged a handful of WW. The Z° followed soon afterwards in May, 1983.

The weak and electromagnetic forces are but two facets of the same basic force, and we can now envisage some astronomically high energy at which the three interactions – electromagnetic, weak and strong – will converge. The final goal is to bring the fourth force, gravitation, into some kind of super-symmetric scheme. Artists strive to be different, but the purpose of science is to show that ultimately everything is the same.

In eleven dimensions

Colin A. Ronan

PAUL DAVIES
Superforce: The search for a Grand Unified Theory of Nature
255pp. Heinemann. £12.95.
0434177008
JOHN BOSLOUGH
Beyond the Black Hole: Stephen Hawking's universe
127pp. Collins. £7.95.
0002171384

The Holy Grail of today's physics is the search for a unified theory to explain the natural world. No longer are theoretical physicists content to use separate forces to describe gravitation, to account for light and other radiation, and to explain the behaviour of atoms and their constituent particles. They want a superforce to cover them all, and so iron out the inconsistencies and lack of symmetry which plagued earlier theories. Some success along these lines has already been achieved, but the exciting thing is that a complete breakthrough does not now seem to be far away. Should it come, should the physicist's hunt for underlying unity be victorious, the repercussions will be tremendous. They will affect not only our picture of the physical universe but our entire philosophical outlook.

With so much at stake, it is clearly time to stand back and take stock of the advances which have led to these last crucial stages in understanding. Yet this is not easy to do; particle physics is concerned not only with particles but with a host of "gauge" theories, as well as "Grand Unified Theories" concerned with electromagnetism, and with the "weak" and "strong" forces within the atom, in addition to concepts like "supersymmetry". Moreover, the physicist moves in a quantum world where indeterminacy rules and mathematics is the key to unlocking every door. We live, it seems, in a universe of no less than eleven dimensions. In fact, the world of modern physics is far removed from the common-sense world of everyday experience; precisely calculable cause and effect have given place to a certain inherent vagueness. If we are to gain any understanding about what is happening, we need a competent guide who can unravel the mysteries without mathematics and pilot the average reader through the strange world of quantum physics. Paul Davies is well equipped for the task, both as a physicist concerned with these matters, and as an author who already has four books of this kind to his credit. In *Superforce*, though, he has exceeded even his own previous flair for exposition.

Very wisely he begins with an introduction setting out our place in the physical universe as seen by today's astronomers; he then commences, gently but firmly, to explore modern physics and the collapse of the nineteenth-century picture once seemed so firmly established. With the need for a new look established, Professor Davies begins to probe deeper, and describes the universe as seen through the eyes of today's quantum physicist. In doing so he provides a really masterly chapter on symmetry and beauty in mathematical physics, which shows that mathematical physics is itself an art as well as a science. The account then gradually gathers momentum, as he describes the concepts behind Grand Unified Theories and the idea of a superforce, and leads us on to an eleven-dimensional universe and to the very beginning of things, before the Big Bang; indeed to the era before there was any matter at all from which the universe we now observe could condense. It is a heady story, and the author is not afraid to raise, in a provocative last chapter, the question of whether, perhaps, some vast cosmic plan underpins the whole of creation – whether, as Sir Fred Hoyle has put it, "the universe is a put-up job". In brief, and in spite of some minor historical slips, *Superforce* is a magnificent exposition of modern particle physics and its hunt for the unity of nature.

But what happens, we may ask, if the particle physicists achieve their quest? Will it be the end of theoretical physics as we understand it? In 1982, in his penetrating inaugural lecture as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, Stephen Hawking concluded, somewhat sadly one feels, that the end is indeed nigh. This lecture, which needs no expert knowledge to grasp its meaning, is now out of print and it is good to see it appearing as an appendix to John Boslough's *Beyond the Black Hole*. The book's subtitle claims that this is an explanation of "Stephen Hawking's universe", but it is in effect a long magazine article about black holes and other aspects of modern cosmology which makes a nod or two towards modern particle physics. Boslough's text is based on two interviews he had with Hawking, but it makes a strange bedfellow with Hawking's own inaugural lecture, brilliant and full of understanding as the latter is.

Stenog

"Swear by Almighty . . . the evidence
I shall . . . and nothing but . . ."
  "Sergeant Gillespie, please tell,
  in your own words, to the Court . . ."

"Constable Renton walked into the
charge room just a few moments
  after the time when Carliell
  had been allegedly punched

and he said 'I'm sorry, Sarge, but I
caught him one with my ring like.
  Couldn't we sort something out?'
  I said 'Get out of the room.'

I said 'I'm not putting my wife and
kids on the line for you, Renton.'
  Carliell had been brought in drunk."
  "Ladies and gentlemen of . . .

I submit that Mr Carliell was
struck a blow of such vicious . . .
  Call Mr Peter Lee . . . Now,
  you, on the night of . . . next cell . . .

tell the Court, please Mr Lee, what you
heard that night in the next cell."
  "I could hear screaming, and he
  shouted 'You've knocked out my eye.

Why have you done this?' he shouted, and
I could hear him like screaming . . ."
  "Constable Renton is charged,
  ladies and gentlemen of . . .".

PETER READING

Remainders

Eric Korn

Book Fair time again. "None but the Brave deserve the Fair", remarked a disgruntled bookperson the other day, doubtless referring to the All-Algonkian Book Fair and Birch Bark Beer Festival at Cherokee, North Carolina. "Fair Is Foul, and Foul is Fair", said a disgruntleder, but in general the Fair has had a Good Press: all that's Fair in light and dark, all's Fair in love, divinely Fair, Fair and yet not Fond, Earth hath not anything more to show more F. He'd be dull indeed of soul and eye who could walk around London in the coming weeks without finding folding shelves, three leaves from the Nuremberg Chronicle and the King Penguin *Bayeux Tapestry* in every other hotel, hostel, pub and church hall: two hundred eager PBFA-niks at the Russell, an élite hundred at Park Lane, a few score more at the Bonnington, Bedford, Royal National and elsewhere, all the way down to six postcard-sellers and a man with a broken run of The Household Dickens in the Palm Court of the Villa Belza, Frinton. And would-be buyers (a healthy majority of whom, of course, are booksellers by profession) and will be hopping from heap to heap like thirst-maddened sand-fleas. The book you need, the bargain you dream of, may be anywhere. I wouldn't presume to advise; but it wouldn't be far wrong to say that the books at the Park Lane will either be perfect or have their imperfections clearly marked, the books at the Russell will either have their imperfections clearly marked or at least the owners will be embarrassed at having them pointed out. At a cheerful non-affiliated Fair in Covent Garden the first six books I wanted lacked a page or a plate or a volume, and their owners were not a bit interested to hear this. "In that case I suppose I could make it a little bit less", said one dog-owner. "I'm really pricing it as a binding", said a shameless other.

The Antiquarian Bookseller's Association has this year issued a catalogue of outstanding eye-glamour, looking every penny of the £2.50 it will cost anyone who wants it (and want it or not, you won't get into the Fair without it). But what's two-and-a-half-nicker for a peek at books by the mega-£ ? There's half-a-million listed in the catalogue alone, with most exhibitors shy of listing anything less than a Speed Atlas or a first edition of *Ulysses* (one of the 150 on Vergé D'Arches, "the rarest issue, i e, hardest to find" says Serendipity Books with precision – there is an issue of 100 copies, signed, which is indeed as easy to find as Centre Point, though paying for it is often a problem). Even Tulkens of Brussels, who offers (for only £60,000 – they'll be queuing) one of the superlatives among Americana, a copy, only the second known, of the Antwerp edition of the Columbus Letter, feels obliged to back it up with a handful of Vesalian Anatomies, profferred with the diffident air of one ready to open a second tin of processed peas for his guests.

In the 1985 catalogue, less international than last year's special event, travel and cartography still dominate, and modern first editions take a back seat: though there is Tom Driberg's copy of the private edition of Waugh's *Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, a pair of Roy Campbell letters with an unpublished MS poem at a surprising £2,600, an advance proof of *The Collector* and a dustwrapped *Lord of the Flies* (£180 and £450) and an original photograph of J. Joyce (Berlin 1930), described as being in very fine condition, presumably the image rather than the subject, for poor Jim was a wreck at the time. Sotheran is displaying a Roberts *Holy Land* (£16,000), Traylen a thirteenth-century illuminated MS of Petrus Lombardus (£32,000), while Sawyer shows his elegant Bond Street premises (not for sale). There is a first edition of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, the first book on Tobacco, the first book on the Pineapple, "the great Qing compendium on water-conservancy technology", and the First Book on Trolling. I'm not sure about this, unless it's the First Official Trolling Manual, like a Valley Girls Guide, or a Sloane Ranger Handbook, only for Trolls, many of whom will undoubtedly be lurking round the stands.

* * *

The Provincial Booksellers' Fairs Association has this year decided against nagging all its members into boasting about their books, and has instead published a simple list of exhibitors, a subject list, and a few brief notes from those who wrote to the editor in time. Sarah Baddiel has a Wedgwood Golfing Jug, Broxholme is exposing the working of the auction ring (in mid-nineteenth-century Belgium, the last time there was an assured sighting of this quasi-mythical phenomenon); Colin Frost has a Kinora, or What-the-Butler-Sawoscope; Camille Wolff has the Police Occurrence Book from Tonbridge Division ("William Turner and William Murrells taken with potatoes in their possession"). And to cheer things up there is a brief trailer for *Bizarre Books* by Russell Ash and Brian Lake (the latter an antiquarian bookseller specializing in Dickensiana) to be launched at the Book Fair by Macmillans (who are publishing this handsome tome at a nugatory £6.95, not far from the cheapest thing on offer). They will display on stand 1 some of the actual Bizarre Books described therein: I can not vouch for the presence of Miller Christy's *The Common Teasel as a Carnivorous Plant* ; *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers*; or Thomas Umpleby's *Keeping your Tools Tip-Top*.

I'd be churlish not to welcome *Bizarre Books*, which – very properly – gives me a handsome acknowlegement, but I disclaim any responsibility for the jokes which gain a certain mournful power by repetition: those lists of innocent titles featuring Roger and Pussy and Dick and Rod and any quantity of Lays, Gays, Organs and Queer Things. At times Lake and Ash fall into the *Private Eye* Pseuds Corner syndrome of not recognizing that someone else may be doing the sending up: the authors of *Sods I have Cut on the Turf* and *How to Avoid Intercourse with Your Unfriendly Car-Mechanic* plainly knew what they were about. Similarly, confusions of names (those mute inglorious Thatchers and Chaplins and Edward Heaths, John Lennon on Eutectic Glass and Billy Graham on Smoke Abatement) soon pall, though I enjoyed Joan Collins's *A New Look at Social Work* and Robert Maxwell's *Borstal and Better: A life story*. Then there are lists of improbable authors (Albert Irk, Mercedes Formica, Semen Frug and Willibald Psychyrembel), and lists of remarkable spine titles: the justly famous *Watts On the Mind* and *Miles On the Horse's Hoof*. My own favourite spine title read HOMO TOBY and turned out to be Melville's *Narrative of a Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands* with the sequel *The Story of Toby*. (This is better known as *Typee*, and had somehow got confused with Melville's other Pacific Island book, *Omoo*. And I wasn't hallucinating that day, even though not two yards down the shelf I found, I'll take my Bible Oath, the saga of Captain Bligh, the spine neatly titled *Martini on the Bounty*.)

There's a chapter on musical titles (more of Dick and Fanny and Gay Balls, "I'll place it in the hand of my solicitor", "Holding my cocoanut" and "Both old men and young, or the well disposed Organ Blower".) There are specialist titles like *The Inheritance of Hairy Ear Rims* and *The Cambridgeshire Coprolite Mining Rush* (I remember it well). Again, how funny you find *The Rhinoceros in Art*, *Timberframed Buildings in Watford* and *Jaws and Teeth of Ancient Hawaiians* depends on whether you are an ancient Hawaiian, a Watfordian, or a rhinoceros. Alas, Lake and Ash think that there are places that are intrinsically funny, like North Dakota. This is a delusion, although persevering readers of this column will have noticed my obsession with Albania. Likewise *Was Oderic of Pordenone ever in Tibet?* loses its resonance if you know something about Oderic, which happily I do not. There are more treasures in this book than either I (or unfortunately the authors) have leisure to tell you about. They give the most cursory mention to *Petroleum in Leather*, a book which has long been a solace to me for the variety of its marginal notes and the curious dreamy directness of its style – it begins thus: "READ THIS FIRST Please destroy the book (Better Stuffing-Grease) which we sent you three years ago". And in the margin is the tiny exhortation: "Begin again." But there is *A Frog's Blimp*, *The Magic of Telephone Evangelism*, *Rubbing Along in Burmese* and the *Romance of Procology*. There is a tantalizing account of the plots of *The Fangs of Suet Pudding* and *The Shunned Vicar of the Gillyflowers*. There is a facsimile of the cover and a sample (adequate, o adequate) of *Jokes Cracked by Lord Aberdeen*. There is a list of thirty-seven faulty bibles ("camels" for "damsels", "glad" for "bald", as well as the better known Treacle, Bugge and Wicked Bibles): there are books bound in fishskin, plywood and greaseproof paper; and there is a book describing one hundred and forty-one ways of spelling Birmingham. And as for me, I shall sit back with my copy of *Eleven Years A Drunkard; Or, the Life of Thomas Doner, Having Lost Both Arms through Intemperance, He wrote this Book with his Teeth as a Warning to Others* (Sycamore, Illinois, 1878).

* * *

I wouldn't dare to make fun of Sotheby's, but I was schadenfreudianly gratified to note that the cataloguer of Lot 141 in a forthcoming sale of Russian literature has not tumbled to the secret identity of the author of *Pionery* (Pioneers), transcribed by him as Uot Uitman. Uot, whose name looks Finno-Ugrian (there is a language called Vottish spoken only by 12 people on the shores of Lake Onega, just across the waters from the 256 people who speak Vepsish) is none other than the sage of Boroklino, the good grey poet of *Leaves of Graz*, *Starting from Paumanovsk*, *Fancies at Novosinsk*, and the unforgettable *Oy Kapitan, Moy Kapitan*.

By a similar perverse ingenuity the same cataloguer translates *Voyna I Mir*, the title, in this instance, of a book of verse by Mayakovsky, as "War and the Universe". While it's true that *mir* means "the world" as well as "peace" (it also means "parish council" for the matter of that), it is curious to ignore the Tolstoyan precedent, as though one were to translate Waugh's *Decline and Fall* as "Decline and Autumn" or *A Farewell to Arms* so "So long, elbows".

Of course it may be a tiny deliberate jest, like the charming throwaway in their latest brochure: here, the Folger Bifolium (two conjoined leaves of a Latin translation of Eusebius, probably written in Northumbria in the first half of the seventh century) is modestly described as "perhaps the earliest English manuscript to come on the market since the Viking raids on Jarrow in 1022". I hadn't thought of Viking sallies as essentially bibliophile forays, but no doubt the plunder did come on to the market: *Highly Important Contemporary Anglian MSS (slightly looted), the late property of an ecclesiastical establishment. To be sold by Soderby of Jarvik in the Great Mote Hall. 10% Danegeld charged on the Hammer Price.*

For anyone with money left after the June book fairs (someone say with access to an offshore oilfields or an offshore bank) there is an impressive sale of literary and historical manuscripts at the end of July. Tennyson's copy of *Maud*, Charles II's copy of the Declaration of Breda, Joyce's death-mask, a newly discovered Pound translation, a characteristically wimpish letter from Neville Chamberlain ("the German desire for peace must have its effect on Hitler and I hope too that the personal contact I have established will help"), a notebook of Yeats and the manuscript of Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*. This unadorned account of his infatuation with the landlady's daughter, an indifferent and flighty person decades his junior and a class and a half below him, upset Hazlitt's friends ("This impotent sensualist", *The Times*; "Disgusting", Crabb Robinson) but must now be the favourite reading of every melancholy middle-aged lecher. Sotheby's estimate of £15,000 for the entire MS seems trifling, when it is compared with the estimate on the same page for an important letter from Piranesi with a drawing of the Warwick Vase, £20,000–£30,000. It shows how little books are valued, as compared to things, and what a splendid idea it would be if you spent every available penny on them next week.

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Letters

'From Time Immemorial'

Sir, – Christopher Hitchens in his "American notes" in your issue of May 10 discusses the sharply differing responses by critics to Joan Peters's book *From Time Immemorial*. I have no wish to intervene in this debate, but feel obliged to correct a misstatement which Mr Hitchens has repeated from a review of the book by Robert Olson published in the April issue of the *American Historical Review*. After denouncing the book and its author, Dr Olson names me, along with some others, as having "endorsed, praised, and . . . apparently aided in the publication" of Ms Peters's book. Mr Hitchens does me the honour of singling out my name alone from those mentioned by Olson.

The facts are quite different. In her list of acknowledgements, Peters thanks me generously for some rather minor assistance that I gave her in the early stages of her work. There is nothing, in the preface or elsewhere in the book or on its dust-jacket, indicating that I had "endorsed" the book or been in any way concerned in its publication. There are in fact nine endorsements on the dust-cover of Ms Peters's book, all of them signed by men and women of eminence. Dr Olson selected a few names from the nine and added mine. Mr Hitchens retained only the name of the man who wasn't there. As a student of Middle Eastern history, I find this episode an interesting example of how, and perhaps why, myths are born, grow, and spread abroad.

BERNARD LEWIS.
Near Eastern Studies Department, Princeton University, Jones Hall, Princeton, New Jersey 08544.

'The Airman and the Carpenter'

Sir, – In his recent letter to you (May 31) in which he takes Hugh Brogan to task for his review of my book *The Airman and the Carpenter*, John S. Kebabian of Massachusetts would have done himself rather more justice had he bothered to acquaint himself with the new evidence that has recently come to light on the Lindbergh/Hauptmann case.

With disarming naivety he accepts wholesale the trial testimony of William Frank of the US Treasury who claimed to have accounted for Hauptmann's receipt of all but $50 of the $50,000 ransom money! If he had read both my book and Anthony Scaduto's *Scapegoat*, he would have seen that this conclusion involved double accounting of a high order, as well as ignoring the money Hauptmann received from his colleague Fisch and from his own carpentry work, in addition to the many ransom bills that must have passed through the banks without trace. Mr Kebabian revives the old myth about Hauptmann not working as a carpenter after the kidnapping. He is evidently unaware of the Retail Credit Company's Report of January 1934 (almost two years after the kidnapping): "Richard Hauptmann . . . works for small property owners in the Bronx and has been receiving a fair amount of work in spite of generally slack conditions in the building trade." Hans Kloppenburg, who worked with Hauptmann on several jobs, confirmed this to me.

Kebabian goes on to challenge Mr Brogan's assertion that the prosecution claim that part of the kidnap ladder came from Hauptmann's landlord's attic is "a blatant lie". It wasn't blatant at the time but it is now. Neither the defence (who were barred from visiting Hauptmann's apartment) nor the jury knew that to reach the attic, one had to remove the linen and shelves from the linen closet, climb up the cleats (on this occasion with saw, chisel and hammer) push open the attic trapdoor and hoist oneself in. The floorboard from which it was claimed the ladder rail came was nailed down with twenty-five nails, so it would have required all of Hauptmann's strength to prise a section of it loose. Had he done so, the subsequent rail would have borne marks of having lain on the joists on one side and of chisel marks round the nail holes on the other. It bore neither. Finally the ladder rails were all 1 by 4 while the attic boards were 1 by 6, so Hauptmann would have given himself a further unnecessary task in having to plane off two superfluous inches. The New York Police admitted having found plenty of 1 by 4 boards in Hauptmann's garage. Why then does Mr Kebabian think he would want to go to the sweat of chopping up bits of his landlord's attic?

Apropos of David Felix's charge (same issue) that I show "a great receptivity to dramatic conspiracy theses", there was no conspiracy because there was no need for one. From the moment of his arrest everyone in America believed Hauptmann to be guilty – of kidnapping, murder and extortion. When no evidence emerged to support this, it came to be invented – in, as its perpetrators thought, the best interests of justice. That is how many, perhaps most, miscarriages of justice happen.

LUDOVIC KENNEDY.
76 Cambridge Road, Teddington, Middlesex.

Development Economics

Sir, – David Lehmann in his rather intemperate letter (June 7) attributes views to me which I do not hold and for which I can find no evidence in my review of *Pioneers in Development* (May 17). I am accused of *implying* that all those who favoured industrialization opposed investment in agriculture. I do not say so because that would be wrong. Not only Myrdal, but also Arthur Lewis showed much better sense. But it is probably true that not even Myrdal or Lewis ever protested against the policy pursued, certainly in many African countries, of deliberately squeezing small farmers in the interest of import-substituting industrialization. Dr Lehmann can hardly deny that African agriculture is in a mess which most observers attribute to a mixture of the policies that have squeezed farmers and insufficient investment especially into food crop research.

Second, am I not to be allowed to applaud, eg, Lord Bauer's writings just because he has not advocated redistributing land from landlords to peasants? In Latin America, with which Dr Lehmann is most familiar, that is an important issue. In many other countries it is not and in a review of about 1,000 words covering contributions from more than two dozen authors, one cannot address every theme.

Next, I do not say anywhere that industrial development is always wrong. Efficient industries developed on the basis of comparative advantage to capture export markets have been manifestly successful in raising living standards in many countries in South-east Asia and elsewhere. My review cites inter-war Japan as an example. Inefficient import-substituting industrialization, partly financed by small farmers, and undertaken in a belief that this is what most of the Pioneers in Development and their followers were advocating, has however served to impoverish countries that were in all conscience poor enough to start with.

Lastly, Dr Lehmann would perhaps have been less angry with me if you, Sir, in your wisdom, had not deleted from my review the following last paragraph – and especially its last sentence:

> An intrinsically adulatory venture of this kind could have been a disaster, especially when five of the "pioneers" are now over eighty (Myrdal eighty-seven) and the youngest, Rostow, is sixty-nine. Far from it. It is a fascinating book, full of perceptive revelations and ideas. If many of the ideas advanced in the 1940s and 50s by some of its foremost economists are now seen to have been hopelessly wrong, that is a salutary thought on which those who are today so certain that they are right might profitably ponder.

WALTER ELKAN.
Brunel University, London.

'The Wise Wound'

Sir, – Lorna Sage in "Behind the lines" (June 7) is kind enough to refer to our "splendidly eccentric *The Wise Wound*, all about menstruation as a world-force". The idea, which does not belong to us, is certainly splendid but it's hardly eccentric. It is central to the argument of Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* (see *The Origin of Table Manners*, 1978, pp221–2), and the notion of the twin beat of ovulation and menstruation being an obvious foundation of human culture in the light of recent evidence concerning menstrual synchrony, is gaining ground. This can be seen in, for example, T. Buckley's "Menstruation and the Power of Yurok Women: Methods of Cultural Reconstruction", *American Ethnologist*, 1982, 9: 47–60; and especially in C. Knight's "Menstruation and the Myth of Matriarchy" in *Blood Magic: New Anthropological Approaches to Menstruation*, edited by T. Buckley and A. Gottlieb, expected from CUP (New York) shortly.

PENELOPE SHUTTLE and PETER REDGROVE.
Falmouth, Cornwall.

London Bookshops

Sir, – I was extremely disturbed to read Roger Lockyer's letter of May 24 complaining of his total inability to purchase, or even order, Christopher Haigh's *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, in our popular Problems in Focus series.

Foyles, Dillon's and Waterstone's all bought copies on publication. Dillon's in fact bought ten hardcovers in January and returned all ten in May, I presume because they were not selling. However, having bought twenty paperbacks in January they re-ordered ten in March and a further ten in May. Foyles also re-ordered six copies in May.

I must admit that the other three bookshops named by Mr Lockyer do not appear to have bought this title from us – I can only presume that they do not consider that they have a market for such a specialized title.

I fully appreciate Mr Lockyer's frustration in being unable to purchase this title but I am equally concerned that he was informed that it would take four weeks for a specially ordered copy to reach the bookshop. I believe this is a gross exaggeration. A survey carried out recently by another well-known bookshop showed they were receiving Macmillan books within thirteen days of placing the order.

I am arranging for a complimentary copy of this title to be sent to Mr Lockyer.

J. E. JACKMAN.
Macmillan Education Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS.

Isabelle de Charrière

Sir, – The Higonnets write in their review (May 17) of Isabelle de Charrière's *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome 6, that it was "subsidized by Prince Bernhard and should incite even his harshest critics to indulgence". May I, as a harsh critic of Bernhard von Lippe, remark that he gave nothing but his name to the "Prins Bernhard" Fund, which subsidized the publication of Belle van Zuylen?

VICTOR BAARN.
University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 210, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

'The Kingdom of the Wicked'

Sir, – Adrian Room (Letters, June 7) takes me to task for objecting to Anthony Burgess's neologisms, claiming that these are both his right and his glory. They may be his right, though the reader has presumably an equal right to dislike them. However, the three examples which I quoted – which were no doubt intended to enhance the "learned" and classical tone of the novel – are particularly objectionable because they do violence to the Latin language on which they are supposedly based. For "imperiate", "imperate" would at least be more correct; for "defestation", "disinfestation"; for "ictal" (which, unlike Mr Room, I cannot find in the *Supplement* to the *OED*), "ictile".

PETER HOWELL.
Department of Classics, Royal Holloway College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX.

The fourth annual Translation Prize competition has been announced by the British Comparative Literature Association. Prizes are offered for English translations of poetry, fiction, drama or literary prose from any language. Details from Professor Arthur Terry, Department of Literature, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester.

Basil Blackwell

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COMMENTARY

Domination and its dangers

Peter Kemp

Daughters and Sons
Radio 4

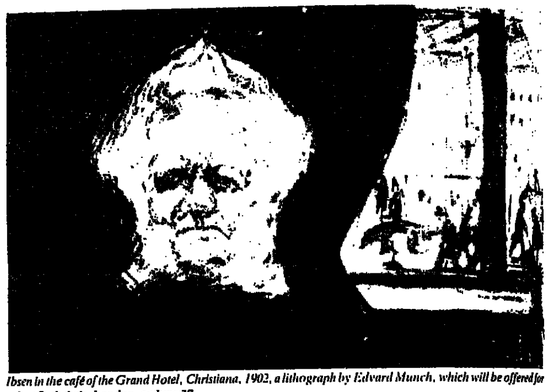
It is rumoured that the American publishers, Norton, snapped up Ivy Compton-Burnett's *Daughters and Sons* under the misapprehension that it came from the pen of W. R. Burnett, a sought-after writer of Chicago gangster stories. If so, the error had its aptness. For, as Radio 4's dramatization grippingly demonstrates, *Daughters and Sons* resounds with explosions of violence, sniping attacks and acrid retaliations. Power battles, vendettas, betrayals, extortions and exploitations are its stock-in-trade. Conversational exchanges tend to be lethally loaded.

When reading fiction, Ivy Compton-Burnett once said, she was "very disappointed if a scene is carried through in the voice of the author rather than the voices of the characters". Her work reflects this preference – which makes it ideally attuned to radio transmission, as Liane Aukin's production of *Daughters and Sons* displays. Helping the dramatization is the fact that the novel is already more than half-way towards a play. Its setting is circumscribed; its action falls conveniently into scene-like episodes; dialogue predominates, with much meticulous notation of pitch and timbre; one character has a voice that is "full and without tone", another speaks "with almost a scream in her voice, though she hardly raised it". Using her acute ear to catch revealing turns of speech too, Ivy Compton-Burnett offers dialogue that is a boon to broadcasters – as, one after another, of a first-rate cast here realizes and makes the most of. Some of her distinctive techniques, such as a liking for moments of *sotto voce* mockery, transfer very smoothly to radio – a medium that seems peculiarly in key with her work. For her characters don't only specialize in speaking, they're also expert listeners, bristling with fine antennae. It is hard to think of any fiction in which there is a keener sense of people picking up both what is said and what isn't: "I would have taken your word", remarks a character in *Daughters and Sons*. "Yes, but I would rather you believed me", comes the response, perfectly on wave-length.

John Spurling's adaptation sets the verbal pleasures – epigram, razor-sharp repartee, ironies that display a character's mettle – ringing out elegantly. Only occasionally is there a false note: a few inserted passages of pastiche Compton-Burnett fail to match the taut, tart power of the original; Spurling's habit of spatchcocking lines of dialogue with the name of the character they're addressed to slightly disjoints some of the book's triumphs of articulation. This apart, his dramatization is exemplary. Consisting of six hour-long episodes, it allows ample time for the brewing of that atmosphere of curdled claustrophobia intrinsic to the Compton-Burnett world, as well as ensuring that the main motifs – domination and its dangers, the pitfalls of self-sacrifice – loom prominently.

Connoisseur casting – sensitive to the subtleties as well as the savageries of the characters' interactions – contributes greatly to the serial's success. All but braying with self-assertion, Patricia Lawrence gives a fearsome credibility to Sabine Ponsonby, perhaps the most formidable of the Compton-Burnett matriarchs. Subsidiary tyrannies also make their voice heard, in skilfully pitched performances. As John Ponsonby, John Rowe captures the way insinuating appeal to people's sympathies can be a mode of coercion. Ann Mitchell as his sister Hetta, collapses from domestic dictatorship into vindictive misery as her near-incestuous hold over her brother is prised away.

Nice distinctions of nastiness are a Compton-Burnett speciality. And – from varieties of egotistic aggression to differing attempts at toadying to tyrants – this serial conveys them with great fidelity. Acutely too, the dramatization registers the varying tones audible among those characters who, lacking power, use wit as a substitute. Tessa Worsley's fine, fraught performance as Clare, the most exacerbated of the Ponsonby children, shows irony becoming inflamed into a morbid sarcasm. Less strident, more astringently entertaining instances of verbal sharpness come from Charity Marcon – whose drawled acutenesses are expertly delivered by Anne Jameson – and Edith Hallam, given a particularly appealing rendering by Vivian Pickles. Encompassing both the fierce and the funny, this dramatization pulses with all the novel's mordant zest.



Ibsen in the café of the Grand Hotel, Christiana, 1902, a lithograph by Edvard Munch, which will be offered for sale at Sotheby's, London, on June 27.

Separate conventions

Jonathon Brown

EDWARD HARPER
Hedda Gabler
Theatre Royal, Glasgow

In the programme booklet to this première production by Scottish Opera the composer contributes an admirably open account of his choice of *Hedda Gabler* as the source for his second opera, revealing a judicious appreciation of the play, its overshadowed mood and taut web of characters. The success of the opera comes from his understanding of the characters other than Hedda herself as good-sized individuals in their own right, their contrasts and congruencies portrayed in vocal and operatic terms. To build a work so sturdily upon ensemble and sometimes spoken conversation, and so grippingly upon Loevborg's exasperation, Tesman's insouciance, Brack's inscrutability, the infuriating aunt and the frustrated Mrs Elvsted is an achievement.

Why then does the evening (unlike the pistols) go off at half-cock? The answers to this bring up the whole question of transposing a good play into anything like as good an opera. It is a misunderstanding of their separate conventions to expect plays to become operas merely through surgery. And an appeal to some notion of convention is required, for the best of all counter-examples – namely *Wozzeck* – is already "odd" as theatre; and the usual counter-example – namely *Otello* – depends for its interest entirely on Verdi's mastery of conventionality as the basic springboard of Italian opera. As a setting or, worse, as an interpretation of Shakespeare, it is crassly one-dimensional. Indeed, as an interpretation of Ibsen's play, Harper's opera is a much more stimulating and intriguing misrepresentation. But unfortunately, the presence of Ibsen is too strongly felt in the libretto for the opera to have its true dramatic independence.

In the play the strange tension is achieved through insinuation and glimpses, half remarks half unanswered, and in soft shades undermined by shadow even from the very moment that Hedda complains of the sunlight. All of these devices are retained by Harper's libretto, but ruined by his insistent music. He has been selective, but he should have found someone to rewrite and stiffen the passages that he did select. His purely dramatic, musical reasons for choosing this plot, to do with disparate ensembles of increasing tension, have been matched by an idiom that manages to open in a state of extreme anxiety and yet increase the tension palpably until the close. It is an idiom betrayed by the words to such a point that one or other will sound like ranting or raving; nor is this helped by Russell Craig's stylized sets. The statue of Hedda's father in one of two alcoves on a rotating column looks as if left over from a production of *Don Giovanni*, and the pistols lie awkwardly in a glass-panelled case set into the wall beneath, like the sword in the tree in *Walküre*. These are simplistic and heavy-handed gestures that we can do without. An utterly naturalistic setting might have restored some of the suspense in Ibsen's delicate understatement, and the horrors of its irony that Harper has singled out so fiercely.

The cast meets the composer's demands well, in acting as well as singing, with Kathryn Harries as Hedda and Rodney Macann as Brack outstanding. Much of the opera's true effect lies in the modesty of its almost conventional means and design, that underlies the ambitions of its extremes of pain; and in consequence one unexpected aspect of Ibsen's play that is best revealed is the most difficult to judge in the play – the humour, the moments at which farce and foreboding clash. Harper also stresses the parallel "pregnancies" of Hedda, with her unwanted child by her unwanted husband, and of Mrs Elvsted finally, with the sketches of Loevborg's burnt masterpiece. It is true that Ibsen certainly stands in no need of Harper, but the fertility of Harper's intuition here turns out to be in no need of Ibsen either.

Sales in New York and Paris

Sarah Bradford

American literature was the principal interest of a sale at Sotherby's New York, on May 22 when nine important letters by Walt Whitman to an early friend, Abraham P. Leech of Jamaica, Queen's, were purchased by Ximenes for the library of Congress for $28,600. Dating from 1840 to 1841 this is the earliest extant correspondence hitherto unknown and unpublished. Written when Whitman was teaching school in the towns of Woodbury and Whitestone on Long Island, the letters express his loathing for small towns and their inhabitants – "I believe when the Lord created the world, he used up all the good stuff and was forced to form Woodbury and its denizens out of the fag ends, the scraps and refuse . . . Making money, plodding on, and on, and on; raising ducks, carting dung and eating pork, are the only methods of employment that occupy Woodbury animals." Thoreau's copy of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, 1855) sold for $11,500 and Whitman's revision of one of his best poems from the collection, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", made $2,750.

A large collection of Tennessee Williams's correspondence, principally to his family, included fifty-eight letters and postcards written during his years at college and early days as a writer, c1929–39. His agent, Audrey Wood, is trying to get him a Rockefeller fellowship "for work on a new long play. I'm going to attempt a dramatic biography of D. H. Lawrence – his life in New Mexico . . . A tremendously fascinating personality!" They were sold for $17,660 to Fleming who also bought for $16,500 another group of sixty-eight letters and postcards written by Williams to his family during the years of his first success, 1940–48, talking of his hopes for the future: ("My work is hard to sell on account of not being written so much for commercial as artistic aims . . .") and of his plays, such as *The Glass Menagerie*. Fleming also acquired for $4,125 a further twenty-eight letters and postcards written by Williams to his family between 1952 and 1970 and, for $6,050, fifty letters, mainly from his family to Williams over the period 1918–69. He purchased for $16,500 two early notebooks by Williams, the first dating from 1933 and the second from 1936, containing notes on writers, vignettes of characters observed from experience, draft poems, lecture notes and general observations.

Of the non-literary material the most important document was a letter by Galileo, one of the last that he wrote before becoming blind. Dated Arcetri, May 9, 1637, and addressed to Benedetto Guerrini, secretary to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, it referred to the preparation of the *Discorsi e dimostrazioni mathematiche*: "Today I have received news from Venice that the first printed sheet is on the way, which is an assurance that the work is being done for me by those Elzevirs, the most famous printers in Europe. They it was who printed my scandalous dialogue [*Dialogo dei due massimi sistemi del mondo*]." It was acquired for $30,800 by Maurice Neville.

In Paris on May 22 Pierre Berès held a sale at the Nouveau Drouot, principally of French literature. the Bibliothèque Nationale purchased for 19,000 francs thirty-eight pages of working notes for Louis Aragon's novel, *Les Beaux Quartiers* (1936), and a private collector acquired for 500,000 francs an autograph album which once belonged to Philoxène Boyer, dilettante writer and friend of the Parisian literary stars of the mid-nineteenth century. It included a hitherto unknown manuscript of one of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, "Les litanies de Satan", a one-page autograph extract from *Salammbô* and a hitherto unknown autograph manuscript of the poem by Gérard de Nerval entitled "Chanson grecque". An American collector paid 125,000 francs for a Flaubert manuscript, sixty-three folio pages of reading notes for *Salammbô*, and 36,500 francs for twelve pages of further research notes for the same novel.

Proust continues to make high prices – a one-page autograph fragment was bought for 80,000 francs by MacNutt who also paid 52,000 francs for a mounted page of corrected proofs with autograph additions of *A l'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 24,000 francs for a charming letter of 1919 to Réjane, encouraging her not to complain of feeling her age ("La vie n'est pas chronologique; On a des étés où il pleut tout le temps ce qui n'empêche pas de compter sur un mois d'août plus radieux qu'un printemps . . ."); 28,000 francs for an eight-page letter dated May 5, 1919, to Misia Sert (despite its being almost exclusively devoted to a discussion of hotels); 40,000 francs for a letter of 1919 to Jacques Porel about his new apartment in rue Laurent-Pichat, and the same price for a letter of March 23, 1919 to Jacques Boulenger talking of his social life and the prospect of publishing a passage from *Albertine* in *Oeuvres Libres*. The autograph manuscript of Jules Renard's *Histoires naturelles*, *L'éléphant* made 162,000 francs, while the working typescript of a Simenon novel, *Le coup de lune*, denouncing colonial ways, written in 1933 after a voyage through Africa was acquired for 155,000 francs by the Houghton Library.

Secret alliances

John Bayley

H. PORTER ABBOTT
Diary Fiction: Writing as action
228pp. Cornell University Press. $22.50.
08014 17139
GARRETT STEWART
Death Sentences: Styles of dying in British fiction
403pp. Harvard University Press. £19.80.
0674 194284

The self-consciousness, and the interest in self-consciousness, which produced the novel form were not slow to grasp its dual relation to the process of art. Art is making up: making up a character, a personality, a situation, a death, birth, beginning and ending. But the irony of his kind of mimesis is that the novelist is imitating something that may not even be there. Suppose we go about it by reversing the process, breaking down, dissolving the situation and the character? Yes, well, from the point of view of art that may be just as effective.

Fashion swings back and forth, and which method seems more authentic will depend on the literary vogue of the moment. Yet is there an underlying tendency to suppose that everything made up is likely to be false, everything broken down true; may this tendency increase to the point where art seems no longer to tolerate the made-up character, story or event? Then the novel, always, like Pauline in her perils, in imminent danger of death, might seem at last terminally afflicted. But the anti-novel waits at the bedside, and nurse and patient can at any moment change roles, for there is really no difference between them. To image consciousness dissolving into existence and nothingness is just as artificial as to set about building it up, and just as likely not to seem true to what we find in daily experience.

Diary Fiction and *Death Sentences*, both full of pleasures and insights for the lover of fictions, examine problems in the construction of fictions that turn out to be closely related. Fiction sets up selves and destroys them, either by ending the book, by questioning and removing their selfhood within the book, or by killing them inside it. The relation of the three is a tricky one, in which the artist gets his chance to pull it off triumphantly, to fake it effectively (Forster, a great believer in sudden death, was also a great believer in faking), or to make a mess of things. The novel that works compels the reader in some way to become aware of the continual birth and death of consciousness and personality.

If the conventional novel often had trouble in conveying the coming and going of selfhood – in the old cosy terms, had difficulty making characters round rather than flat – a more analytical type is apt to paint an equally misleading picture in showing a self searching for "truth", or for its "true self". Neurosis in such novels is the badge of the truth-seeker, for whom the novel's ordinary properties – love, legacies, intrigue, social comedy – are the merest flim-flam. H. Porter Abbott quotes Ernest Becker's book *The Denial of Death*, which argues that the breakdown of character, in life or fiction, is "the result of a keen perception of the truth. The neurotic's awareness of the truth does not allow him to accept the arbitrary form of character."

This kind of perception of the truth is rather like the Marxist's perception of the inevitability of the revolution. The novel that takes such perceptions too seriously is apt to be merely schematic, like Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, in which formlessness and breakdown are solemnly opposed to people who are whole "because they've chosen to block off . . .". In this position the novelist is apt to take refuge, as Lessing has done, in denying that truth – as opposed to mere artistic success – is possible to the form, in denying that the novelist can ever pull off anything authentic: "the terrible despair. So you've written a good novel or a moderate novel, but what does it actually say about what you've actually experienced? The truth is – absolutely nothing. Because you can't. I don't know what one does about novels.

"Speak for yourself ducky", has to be the irreverent reply. There is a boomering effect; this sort of bleak honesty in "public statement" (Professor Abbott's phrase) is the privilege of those who have failed to pull it off in the pages of the novel itself. And it has to be said that the deliberate search for truth is no way for the novelist, of any sort, to go about his business; just as it does not help him to ask Abbott's rhetorical question: "Have words been torn from the world, and is our cultural revolution the cause of it, or have modern conditions merely exposed the age-old illusion of words' unity with the world?"

Intellectuals may ponder, but artists in the novel form have their own ways past these difficulties. Humour flushes them out best, the humour of Dostoevsky, Kafka, Beckett. Our cogent old friend, the Underground Man, is also a joke figure, and thus reveals far more, in his claim that he suffers from the "disease of lucidity", than Doris Lessing's tedious Anna of *The Golden Notebook* could ever do. In fact the striking thing about diary fiction – and Abbott's analysis of its rites and conventions is both elegant and penetrating – is that from *Portuguese Letters* to *Dangling Man* the most successful examples of the genre have exploited the essentially comic nature of self-scrutiny. The humour is latent of course, underlining Dr Johnson's pronouncement that "nothing is too little for so little a creature as man". Vanity, infinitely touching in the love-letters of Guilleragues's Portuguese nun – letters which are, as Abbott observes, a self-creative diary – becomes deliberate comedy in Georges Duhamel's *Salavin's Journal*.

On with the new life. Would that I were older by one year, to be able to re-read this journal and weep for joy! I am ready. I am waiting. I'm off to meet myself.
January 8 – Nothing to report.
January 9 – Nothing to report.
January 10 – Nothing.
January 11 – Nothing that has to do with the situation in any way.
January 12 – Nothing.
January 13 – Nothing. It's snowing, but that's of no importance. To be struck out if I copy this journal.
January 14 – Nothing.

On the 24th "I think there is something. No, it is not important enough"; and to add to the "Nothing" at the end of the month the diarist resorts to the usual capitulation: "While I'm waiting I think I'd better make a few more explanations. The thing that strikes me . . .". The jest is of course at the novel's expense. The diarist has to invent himself and his days as the synchronic device, for in general the novel reader is in the dark as much as the character. Only the author knows that Tess of the D'Urbervilles is to be hanged, though the reader may fearfully suspect that some bad fate is in store for her. Kundera puts reader and author in the same situation, and both outside the fiction in which the reader would normally be unwittingly involved with the character.

Abbott does not mention these examples, but the exact diary equivalent of Kundera's characters is W. N. P. Barbellion (itself an invented name) in the *Journal of a Disappointed Man*. From the set-up of the book the reader knows that the diarist died a few days after the last entry, so that he knows more about the diarist than the diarist who is creating himself in the diary. The opposite effect was cunningly created by William Golding in *The Paper Men*, whose narrator does not appear to realize that as he establishes himself in the narrative he is becoming increasingly intolerable to the reader. But the power and patronage that this gives the reader over him is suddenly blown away by the trick ending, when the narrator at his typewriter is sniped in mid-word by his would-be biographer, whom he has humiliated and persecuted. The narrator thus *escapes* into death from the reader, who is left staring foolishly, as it were, with no comfortable sense of passing judgment on the man he has been reading about.

All sorts of tricks are possible in the working out of the process, but it is logical that the self-creation or self-exposure implicit in a diary-type narrative should be linked with the arbitrary definition of a character which the invention of his death by the author imposes on the reader. By drawing the circle which death closes the author exercises the most elemental power over his creation, and also detaches himself from it, as Goethe does from his hero's suicide, or Golding from the abrupt assassination of his Paper Man. It might be said, paraphrasing E. M. Forster, that the death which destroys the man creates the character. But Professors Abbott and Garrett Stewart's masterly books together and you get a useful fix on a map of the relations between fictional and self-creation.

Novelists who do not kill off their characters, either literally or by some metaphoric dismissal, run the risk of becoming too closely identified with them in the reader's mind. It was easy for Flaubert to say he was Madame Bovary after disposing of her by poison and by other means: no critic before that would have been likely to accuse him of inadvertently creating himself. Roquentin, in *Nausea*, and Joseph in Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man*, its American counterpart, are, on the other hand, so close to their authors that both parties disappear in metaphysical speculation on whether individuals as such can exist. The coherent presentation of the self is not compatible with the intelligence that dissolves belief, for character in fiction is a product of belief. Sartre and Bellow use the diary form to destroy both its suppositions: that the diarist will find himself by writing about himself ("I cannot feel that anything that happens to me has any real existence until I see it reflected here", writes Gide's diarist in *The Counterfeiters*); or that the diarist will reveal his whole self inadvertently by these means to a reader. Dostoevsky's Underground Man may be doing both, instinctively using communication as a proof of personal existence.

The diarist and novelist come together in having it both ways, indulging in self-creation, that the latter can then claim has the objectivity of someone not conceivably themselves. Lucy Capacchione in 1979 produced a do-it-yourself manual called *The Creative Journal: the art of finding yourself*, an art claimed as self-evidently therapeutic. One might compare this with the desire to be loved "for oneself", which, as Elizabeth Jane Howard remarks in *The Long View*, is attractive to women who wish to put the burden of finding out who they are on to someone else. Bellow's Joseph likes the idea of the individual, some noble or humanist construction with which he could align himself, and this urge is both profound and widespread

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in the process of successful narrative creation. George Eliot makes Maggie Tulliver both her apologia and her champion. Evelyn Waugh's heroes are always in a sense the kind of man he would wish to be, the persona that hangs before him like a species of religious imitation. However much they may be figures of self-parody, Kingsley Amis's heroes always possess the fundamental "decency" which shows that their author is also creating his deeper necessities through them, the basic self-satisfaction which in Tolstoy's novels is the hallmark of a healthy individuality. The heroine of Alison Lurie's *Foreign Affairs* is a self-parody whose decencies establish both those of the art the author is practising, and her own role in it.

If finding oneself and creating oneself are for the artist closely allied there is a further satisfaction in killing the finished product and starting again. Freedom for the diarist-novelist is a succession of individualities. Conrad kills Nostromo with laborious skill as part of the plot, but he kills Decoud in the spirit of something that has to be done to himself every day – his own weakness is externalized and dramatized in Decoud. The distinction is an important one. Both diarist and novelist try to create what Lionel Trilling called an authentic character, whether a self or not, and the reader can usually detect what is going on, whatever the form of the work. Usually but not always. The *Portuguese Letters* were for long thought to be those of a genuinely love-lorn Portuguese nun, and the skill of Guilleragues, like that of a whole tradition of French authors from La Rochefoucauld to Flaubert, lay in the way he seemed to allow his character to create herself through her own emotional longings. Her love becomes "less dear to her than her passion", and she ends by begging her lover "not to trouble the state that I am preparing for myself". That state is self-creation, and the author appears to have allowed his character to achieve it for herself, by attending with complete objectivity to the plot of her emotions.

Richardson was to achieve something very similar and at much greater length in *Clarissa*, a more *natural* work, but one that secured the same extraordinary popularity as the Portuguese nun by absorbing the reader entirely in what seemed a self-realization of character without benefit of author. Allied to this mode are more anomalous masterpieces like *A Hero of Our Time* and *Wuthering Heights*. We can watch Lermontov and Emily Brontë arranging with great skill a structure which objectifies their characters completely, while at the same time the reader is well aware how deep is the concealed emotional alliance between them and the author. Lermontov was fed up with romantic heroes in contemporary daydream fiction, and Emily Brontë may well have felt an equal distaste for the self-creation that came naturally to her sister Charlotte. Watching both writers distance themselves from their creations can be a connoisseur's pleasure for the reader, just as, at a more modest level, he can enjoy the equally adept but more straightforward relations between author and creation in such novelists as Evelyn Waugh, Kingsley Amis or Alison Lurie.

Fascinating as are Garrett Stewart's pages on death in Dickens, in Forster, Conrad, Lawrence and Woolf, his tendency to use the jargon of grammatology and meta-narrative is apt to dull the basic excitement of what he is saying and remove the facts of death to an abstract metaphysical plane. In view of the torrent of metaphors which have always had to attend a literary death this may be not unfitting, however, and in his mixture of zest and erudition this critic brilliantly reveals just how essentially various is the role that metaphor plays. It is needed, as Lucretius originally implied, to conceal the fact that life and death have nothing whatever to do with one another, and it also helps to fix individuality in terms of metaphoric description. Everyone remembers the cut on the dead Heathcliff's hand from the swinging shutter, and how it has not bled; but taking this example and following in the footsteps of Stewart I would also say that our memory shows something deep in our sense of Heathcliff's physical life: that he has always been a bloodless monster, an elemental created from an intense apprehension of nature, of rocks and stones and trees. He does not, paradoxically, have real blood in his veins, as do some of those that bleed in fiction, like Mr Merdle, or Alec D'Urberville.

Death is a great determinant in fiction, as much as the assertion of character or plot, but a general truth that seems to emerge from *Death Sentences* is that a character who is killed has first been "used". Comic characters rarely die; they fade away like Mr Micawber; Jane Austen is the most humane of creators, never killing a hero or heroine, or anyone else if she can help it. Kurtz must die, though, because he is a symbolic and representative figure, and the same is true of Lawrence's Gerald Crich, or of Banford in *The Fox*. Forster kills like a cat, out of pure wantonness, and, as Stewart says, "each time a character drops dead on his remorseless pages the thud reverberates against . . . fiction's formulaic death scenes".

Stewart is not interested in the general power question, however, but in the more fashionable modern field of fiction as metaphor, of which death is indeed a powerful illustration. "The prophetic eye / Closing upon difficulty / Opens upon comparison", as Laura Riding puts it in "Death as Death". Certainly death is never death in fiction but always something else, and that may be why more mimetic novelists tend to avoid it, presenting fiction as Wittgenstein described life, which "has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limit". Thackeray cunningly suggests at the end of *The Newcomes* that he and the reader had got fond of his characters. "They were alive and I heard their voices, but five minutes since was touched by their grief. And have we parted with them here on a sudden, and without as much as a shake of the hand."

This suggests what is true of old-fashioned novels, that we prefer most of their characters to live as we do – that is not to die; that we half recognize their unreality as we finish the book but continue to know them like friends and enter into their joys and sorrows. In more modern novels, and modern novel criticism, the character as metaphor dies in a sense without ever having lived, indeed *because* he has never lived. Thackeray has it both ways. They were alive, but have left us at the book's ending, and "*Partir, c'est mourir un peu*".

Stains on the silence

Maggie Gee

SAMUEL BECKETT
Collected Shorter Prose 1945–1980
218pp. John Calder. £9.95.
0 7145 4027 1

RUBIN RABINOWITZ
The Development of Samuel Beckett's Fiction
231pp. University of Illinois Press, distributed by Harper and Row. £16.50.
0 252 01095 7

LANCE ST JOHN BUTLER
Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being: A study in ontological parable
213pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 31474 3

Samuel Beckett's *Collected Shorter Prose* is essential reading if you missed the texts in their earlier published forms. Quibbles first; the presentation of this edition is strangely slapdash. Two of the stories, "Closed Space" and "From an Abandoned Work", are incorrectly titled on the contents page. The dust-jacket, which gives a chronology of other Beckett titles, supplies the date of publication or composition indifferently, although the two might be as much as twenty-five years apart. The "Publishing History" inside the book is erratic. It misinforms us that "The End" was first published in 1954; in fact it was first published under the title *Suite*, by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1946, in a truncated form which caused an argument with Beckett. There is a similar omission with the "history" of "The Expelled". That said, the actual texts are beautifully set, and – a rare occurrence these days – I did not detect a single misprint.

The collection begins with the "Four Novellas": "First Love", "The Expelled", "The Calmative" and "The End". They are among the first works Beckett attempted after the moment of revelation, elliptically described in *Krapp's Last Tape*, which led to the great surge of post-war writing he called "the siege in the room". He began to write "from the dark he had struggled to keep under", and to use a kind of monologue in which the voice is more universal than personal. He also began to write in French.

The "Four Novellas" all deal with a territory that now seems typically Beckettian: the solitary exile from family and respectability, failing tragi-comically in his encounters with those few human beings who do not deride him. The style becomes markedly simpler and more concentrated as external properties and characters dwindle away. This first-person narrator may have been a scholar once – he occasionally uses words like "syncretist" or "omnidolent" – but that was long ago, and now he has more pressing concerns: his hat; his dead father; his fear of being thrown out of any shelter he finds; avoiding the sexual lures of those desperate enough to offer them; and his physical ailments.

> I didn't understand women at that time. I still don't for that matter. Nor men either. Nor animals either. What I understand best, which is not saying much, is my pains.

It is easy to forget, especially when reading his commentators, how funny Beckett is, with an unpredictable, violent, childish, often obscene sense of humour which must have been even more startling at the time of writing. An encounter with a virtual stranger on a park bench:

> You disturb me, I said, I can't stretch out with you there. The collar of my greatcoat was over my mouth and yet she heard me. Must you stretch out? she said. The mistake one makes is to speak to people. You have only to put your feet on my knees, she said. I didn't wait to be asked twice, under my miserable calves I felt her fat thighs. She began stroking my ankles. I considered kicking her in the cunt.

What happens most centrally in these novellas is the telling of them; the voice is more immediately present than the events it narrates. "I'll tell my. If a story, I'll try and tell myself another story, to try and calm myself." The "Texts for Nothing", thirteen short pieces mostly written in the aftermath of the "siege in the room", move further back inside the narrating mouth. They are exhausting, panic-stricken pieces, strings of long sentences gasping and stuttering with the commas Beckett usually shuns.

> It's not me in any case, I'm not talking of me, I've said it a million times, no point in apologising again, for talking of me, when there's X, that paradigm of human kind, moving at will, complete with joys and sorrows, perhaps even a wife and brats . . . .

Here the human "paradigm" X is a sentimental cliché. But generally in the post-1945 prose Beckett moves towards his own kind of human archetype. This figure, unlike monolithic X, represents the have-nots. Those who are not substantial citizens or emotionally "complete" can find part of themselves in Beckett's new fragmented voice: "It's all the same dream, the same silence, it and me, it and him, him and me, and all our train, and all theirs, and all theirs . . .".

The remaining pieces in the book, written in the 1960s and 70s, coincide with Beckett's increasing fame as a playwright. Theatre helped him out of the impasse which threatened him in prose. The largest group of these later prose pieces – including "All Strange Away", "The Lost Ones", "For to End Yet Again", "Closed Space" – are extraordinarily close to theatre or film in their precise evocation of external scenarios where small, tortured figures make circumscribed movements. These scenarios are entirely representational – concrete and physical – but not at all naturalistic.

> Abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one. . . . Inside a flattened cylinder fifty metres round sixteen high for the sake of harmony. The light. Its dimness. Its yellowness . . . . Its restlessness at long intervals suddenly stilled like panting at the last. Then all go dead still . . . . A few seconds later all begin again . . . .

Syntax has broken down to spare blocks of words, and the text on the page is for the most part a dense column of print, unparagraphed and unpunctuated. Beckett has found a way to avoid the potential weaknesses of prose fiction, namely diffuseness through a surfeit of characters or locations, and a fatal transparency. The reader of much traditional fiction may never fully engage with the language but instead look through it at a preconceived object. Beckett's short fiction works against this kind of lazy reading by means of its brevity, its syntactical and rhythmical eccentricity, and an absolute attention to physical detail which confines the reader in the same narrow space as the single narrating, suffering consciousness. That space is so unlike any literal place we know that we cannot distort or weaken it through casual recognition or analogy. Yet it is recognizable at a deeper level; it belongs to a fundamental psychic geography of isolation and confinement.

Other late prose pieces voice the lyrical visual memories which occasionally brightened the "Four Novellas", but now the images of childhood are no longer undercut by savage humour. Beckett shows us a little summer-house with rose-red panes, the "blue pallor" of a figure who may be maternal. There are short perfect narratives of actions completed in old age:

> The old sunlit face. Tableau vivant if you will . . . . All is silent from now on. For as long as she cannot move. The sun disappears at last and with it all shadow. All shadow here. Slow fade of afterglow. Night without moon or stars.

Each of Beckett's short prose pieces presents a wholly imagined world, new and strange, where every word matters and every image follows from the others inevitably. In comparison, much contemporary writing looks like showy inconsequential chatter.

Beckett's suspicion of excessive speech has not rubbed off on his commentators. Both Rubin Rabinowitz and Lance St John Butler claim to make Beckett more accessible. Rabinowitz sets about this task in a workmanlike, intelligent way, offering perceptive analysis of Beckett's pre-1945 fiction; he is particularly good on the first novel, *Murphy*. But he does sometimes explain too much:

> Beckett refers to his characters as masks and machines; this, in fact, is what they are. The narrator is the author's persona, hence he is given the author's name.

Lance St John Butler is a more hubristic commentator who reads Beckett's work as a series of "ontological parables". Ramming home his parallels with the work of Heidegger, Sartre and Hegel, Butler simply lifts quotations from Beckett's work piecemeal, as if the meaning of each Beckettian text bore no relation to its internal form and content. Of course, as the blurb claims, literary texts become "less opaque" when they are seen as parables. They also become less themselves. "Thus the 'voice' of Molloy is god, the Absolute, the author, the self, consciousness", Butler tells us. Or else, as Beckett has insisted, "I meant what I said."

Academic literary studies have played an ambiguous part in much contemporary writing, including Beckett's. On the one hand, he himself was a product of the university, as were some of his earliest admirers; and some academics have written illuminating and exciting secondary texts. But most academic criticism is infinitely duller and more difficult (as well as wordier and more expensive) than the writing it feeds off, and the ever-rising stockade of critical books around Beckett is likely to deter the non-academic reader. At his best Beckett writes from a central core of memory and feeling to which anyone may respond, if they listen closely. The voice seems at first unfamiliar, but it leaves behind a "stain on the silence" which touches us all.

The New Collected Short Stories by E. M. Forster (267pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £9.95. 0 283 99195 X) contains the two collections which comprised the original *Collected Short Stories*, published in 1947, but is enlarged by the inclusion of three of the later stories Forster composed on erotic themes, which were not published during his lifetime.

In slave ship and mineshaft

Howard Temperley

BETTY FLADELAND
Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization
232pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 36207 1

It was the view of those who defended slavery – as well as of many who did not – that abolitionists were single-minded zealots. Surely there must be something eccentric if not positively morbid about such a consuming passion for righting the wrongs done to faraway blacks while so much needed to be done to alleviate the sufferings of their British fellow subjects. Some even suspected that, in addition, there may have been more self-interested motives *involved*, as when William Cobbett, writing in an already familiar vein, accused them of being pious hypocrites, wringing their hands over the sufferings of colonial slaves while salving their own consciences by supplying the poor with tracts instead of bread.

Nor is it altogether surprising to find that modern scholars have given some support to these beliefs. The most notable example is that of Eric Williams who, unable to reconcile the notion of disinterested benevolence with his own essentially economic interpretation of events, was at pains to minimize and, as far as possible, discredit the contribution made by the abolitionists: he found no difficulty in showing that a number of them were, in their attitudes to domestic issues, distinctly conservative. Wilberforce, he tells us, "was familiar with all that went on in the hold of a slave ship but ignored what went on at the bottom of a mineshaft". More recently, David Brion Davis, currently the leading scholar in the field, has lent his authority to the view that, consciously or unconsciously, they were seeking to divert attention from domestic problems which, because of their very proximity, appeared a good deal more threatening.

Yet even the most cursory glance at the careers of individual abolitionists reveals that this is far from being the whole story. While some undoubtedly did hold reactionary views, others did not. They were, it turns out, an oddly assorted lot. Some, like Wilberforce, were aristocrats by birth, others, like George Thompson, essentially plebeian by origin, although the great majority may be roughly classified as middle-class. Even so, the range of economic origins, religious beliefs and social attitudes they represented was extraordinarily wide. In the early years, when their differences in outlook were mostly concealed from public view, they were not averse to disagreeing in private. Even when they saw eye-to-eye on slavery issues they remained divided over other questions. Later on, especially after 1830 when the movement split, these differences were brought into the open. By 1840, when the first World Anti-Slavery convention was held in London, there was no longer one anti-slavery movement but several quite different ones competing for public attention. In so far as any generalization is possible it would appear that the great majority of anti-slavery activists were of a liberal, reforming disposition and, as such, more willing to countenance social and political change than most men and women of their class and background.

It is in order to set the record straight on this issue that Betty Fladeland has set about tracing the connections between these activists and what she represents as being – although the concept is never precisely defined – the problems of the British working class. Her method is to catalogue the full range of reforming interests embraced by eleven individuals associated in various ways with the cause. Presumably she has chosen these particular figures because, collectively, their careers spanned the whole period from the 1760s to the 1870s and because, given their diverse origins (three came from families of some gentility, five were bourgeois, and three working-class), and varied affiliations, they represent a rough cross-section of the movement's activists. Three of those chosen, Granville Sharp, Joseph Sturge and Harriet Martineau, are well known, but others, such as James Currie, Patrick Brewster and Henry Solly, are apt to be little more than names even to professional nineteenth-century historians.

What Professor Fladeland does succeed in demonstrating beyond any doubt is that these individuals – and one may safely assume that the same goes for many of their associates – were far from being single-issue fanatics. If they can be described as fanatics at all, which is doubtful, it would be on account of the eagerness with which, at least on the basis of the evidence here provided, they embraced absolutely every good cause that was going. The catalogue is endless. Wilberforce may not have known what went on at the bottom of a mineshaft but Harriet Martineau made sure that she did by actually visiting one and was sufficiently impressed by her experience to come out in favour of Government inspection and compulsory insurance for collieries. She also actively attacked the Game Laws, flogging in the services, impressment, capital punishment, the parliamentary franchise, legal discrimination against women, the inadequacies of the educational system, intemperance, and much else besides.

The same is true of the other figures on the list. Granville Sharp, the father of the British anti-slavery movement, also advocated parliamentary reform, the abolition of impressment, the revision of the penal code, granting allotments of land to the poor, and was an outspoken supporter of the aims of the American and – initially at least – of the French revolutionaries. He emerges as a precursor of that busy nineteenth-century benevolent élite with its world of worthy causes and overlapping committees to which Sturge and the rest belonged. Of all the figures listed it is indeed Sturge who, with his Quaker connections, most clearly epitomizes the all-round reformer. Although he is nowadays remembered chiefly for his opposition to Negro Apprenticeship and for being the founder of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, he was probably best known to his contemporaries for his associations with Peace and Chartism, and his launching, in 1841, of the Complete Suffrage Movement.

But granting that Fladeland is justified in drawing attention to the broad range of reforming interests embraced by these activists, it is not always easy to know what to make of her brief biographical sketches. Sometimes, one suspects, she tries too hard, drawing inferences, on the basis of her anecdotal evidence, which scarcely seem warranted. More important is the question of limits. Even the most extreme of libertarians – which none of these was – must accept *some* limits. The problem with Fladeland's account is that we are often in doubt as to what those limits were. Unlike David Brion Davis, who begins with the limits and works outwards, Fladeland simply dumps the evidence in front of us, leaving it to the reader, by process of elimination, to guess which causes the individual in question had chosen *not* to embrace.

The introduction and epilogue are by far the most rewarding sections of the book. Here the author shows an awareness of the issues which currently are of most concern to historians. How genuine was working-class interest in the anti-slavery cause, as revealed, for example, by the astonishing number of signatures gathered in successive petition campaigns? To what extent was the advocacy of emancipation in the colonies seen as a threat to social stability within Britain itself? Above all, why did abolition feature so prominently among the reform movements of the time? Was it because chattel slavery was perceived as a form of tyranny of an altogether different order from that affecting the wage slaves of Britain, whose sufferings, although real, were seen as mild and temporary by comparison? Was it because one form of suffering was seen as "unnatural" and the other as "natural"?

And could there, after all, be an element of telescopic philanthropy involved in the sense that the British, unlike the Americans, would not be obliged to live with the consequences of their actions? We are told by Betty Fladeland that the present volume is an offshoot of a larger work on which she is engaged, the purpose of which is to chart the association of abolitionism with working-class endeavours. Perhaps, in due course, she will provide answers to these questions.

Sugar and pill

John Ward

RICHARD B. SHERIDAN
Doctors and Slaves: A medical and demographic history of slavery in the British West Indies, 1680–1834
420pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0 521 25965 7

During the second half of the eighteenth century the sugar planters of the British West Indies – constrained by humanitarian opinion at home, and by the rising cost of new labour from Africa – made available to their slaves what was probably at the time the world's most comprehensive programme of large-scale medical care. On almost every estate a hospital was built and the services of a medical man retained; jalap, Glauber's salts and antimonial powders appeared as regularly in invoices of plantation stores as hoes or barrel staves. However, R. B. Sheridan argues, the benefits from this provision were negligible. In the islands doctors became more numerous and better qualified, but even when they could escape the limitations of contemporary science to offer useful advice, it was likely to be counteracted by overseers struggling to maintain production in deteriorating economic circumstances. On the eve of emancipation estate medicine may already have been in decline, most slaves were still malnourished and brutally overworked, and in nearly all the sugar colonies deaths still exceeded births by a wide margin.

Professor Sheridan has probably provided the definitive account of the doctrines and organization of British West Indian slave medicine; on its practical consequences he is less confident, although his difficulties are largely intrinsic to the subject. If medicine achieved so little, why did proprietors allow it any claim upon their revenues? Among free populations mountebanks can profit from the invalid's personal sufferings, but these are not likely to have troubled an owner considering how to deal with his slaves. Despite the mismanagement and misinformation that resulted from widespread absentee ownership, estate conditions provided opportunities for controlled, dispassionate experiment, and it is hard to see why planters should have persisted with measures that were obviously useless. Furthermore, many doctors themselves became considerable owners of slaves, with an unusually close interest in their patients' survival, and in identifying the most cost-effective techniques. Sheridan acknowledges that alongside the grim procedures inspired by the theory of humours, elements of practical common sense run through the medical manuals, stressing the value of adequate diet and basic hygiene. He also detects a growing discrimination in the use of expensive (and often lethal) imported materials. Originally West Indian doctors got much of their income from drug-dealing – some were in fact sponsored by London apothecaries – but by the early nineteenth century most planters arranged their own supply of medicines, or required that its cost be included in the doctor's predetermined annual capitation fee. Perhaps for this reason recommended dosages became more restrained. Where James Grainger in 1764 suggested ten drops of laudanum, his editor in 1802 thought one sufficient, and doubted whether mercury should be used at all. On the other hand, in the 1820s and '30s reports were still current of squalid, dilapidated hospitals, casual over-prescribing, and the continuing popularity of the "purging plan".

The obstacle to any final judgment on assertions of this kind is the shortage of clearly authentic information about the day-to-day management of the sick. Publications on slave medicine detail how, according to informed opinion, a particular ailment ought to be treated, but what influence did they have? Must we accept the equally numerous critiques of current practice, many of them from philanthropists arguing the case for emancipation, or doctors reflecting on the incompetence of their professional colleagues? Sheridan is fully aware of these problems and supplements his printed sources with the single hospital prescription book that is known to survive, and a few rather sparse sets of doctors' papers, without leaving any clear sense of how routine medicine had evolved, or with what results. Such material must now have been mined out, and further progress will be through the use of more circumstantial evidence, especially on demography, the topic where Sheridan is least satisfactory.

As he emphasizes, except in Barbados, the slaves of the British West Indian sugar colonies failed to achieve sustained natural increase, and in this sense the planters' attempts at "Amelioration" obviously failed. Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century rates of depletion had been substantially reduced, and in comparison with more favoured regions such as the United States the British islands were now remarkable for low birth-rates rather than high death-rates. Sheridan mentions the epidemiological improvements that are likely to have resulted from the closure of the transatlantic slave trade, or the inhibiting effects on fertility of prolonged breast-feeding, but in estimating their importance he does not attempt close statistical analysis of the kind that has been pioneered so effectively for West Indian slave populations by B. W. Higman. For example, did any particular diseases become less virulent? As time passed medical authors apparently gave rather less prominence to dysentery and diarrhoea as causes of death. Is this impression confirmed by estate records, and if so, should progress be attributed to the declining proportion of recently delivered Africans on the estates, to better feeding, or to medical care? *Doctors and Slaves* raises more questions than it answers, and will be indispensable for their eventual resolution.

TLS
Forthcoming Special Numbers
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October 11 – Frankfurt II
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November 15 – Economics
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Readings of reform

Isabel de Madariaga

JOHN P. LeDONNE
Ruling Russia: Politics and administration in the age of absolutism 1762–1796
410pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £43.30.
0691054258

ROBERT E. JONES
Provincial Development in Russia: Catherine II and Jakob Sievers
225pp. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
0813510260

The spate of scholarly publications in the past few years on the evolution of Russian state and society has proved particularly valuable for those who do not read Russian and can now draw upon serious monographs in many fields and for many periods. The history of administrative institutions is not, however, everybody's favourite subject. It lacks the colour and the drama which biography or social history can provide. Nevertheless it is an essential component in the understanding of the evolution of a particular polity. John LeDonne has for some years devoted himself to this somewhat arid branch of study and has produced a series of useful, indeed illuminating articles on Russian eighteenth-century administrative and financial institutions.

In *Ruling Russia: Politics and administration in the age of absolutism 1762–1796* he brings together his studies of the administrative reforms of Catherine II in the decade 1775–85, and places them in a somewhat idiosyncratic framework. LeDonne has divided his book into sections dealing with the central government, internal administration, which he rather misleadingly terms "the Police", the judiciary, financial administration, and the government of the western and southern borderlands, both before and after the reforms. The result of this fragmented approach is that one does not obtain a very precise picture of the details of the reform of 1775 as a whole, the parts of which tend in any case to be submerged in the tide of interpretation.

As his title suggests, LeDonne sees administration in terms of politics, and he bases his interpretation on a number of assumptions about Russian society and the formation of government policy, which he fails to substantiate. He argues for instance that political power was vested in a small number of closely related families or clans, which were also the largest landowners. But in our present knowledge of the private personalities of the leading Russian aristocrats, it is extremely hazardous to venture an opinion on the continuity of their allegiances to each other or to the crown. Second, LeDonne develops the theory of an overall division of power between Prince A. A. Vyazemsky, the procurator-general, representing Great Russian interests and the strengthening of the revenue-collecting function, and Prince G. A. Potemkin, whom he sees as the prime mover of the "deconcentration" implicit in the reform of 1775, the author of a "redistribution of authority within the ruling class", the prime purpose of which was to "create spoils . . . for the demobilized officers and landowners" and to develop the newly annexed lands as sources of land and labour.

This highly questionable interpretation is buttressed by LeDonne's positively Hobbesian vision of Russian politics as the politics of the jungle; the war of all upon all. In his view, people invariably act as a class, never as individuals. The main function of institutions is to organize the division of the spoils; the main motive of individuals is to grab as much as they can and to "exploit" (a word which occurs on almost every page) the serfs to the uttermost, and by extension the state peasants, who should therefore be regarded as peasants "held in trust by the élite". (Strange that so few were ever granted as rewards to the nobility!) The state, according to LeDonne, is synonymous with the ruling class, therefore there can be no conception of the public good, no state interest beyond the selfish views of the nobility. Thus, the whole of Catherine's reform programme is designed to facilitate the extraction of resources from the dependent population to enable the nobles to assert their total domination over municipal life, and over the peasantry, both serfs and state peasants. Such a neo-Marxist perspective can only be sustained by leaving many questions unanswered – even unasked, and by stretching Russian history here and shrinking it there to fit the Procrustean bed of ideology. Hence, though this work is full of information of one sort or another, it is of more use to those who know some Russian history already and can discount its partiality.

In his *Provincial Development in Russia: Catherine II and Jakob Sievers*, Robert E. Jones is concerned in even more detail than LeDonne with the specific question of the formulation and implementation of the reform of 1775. He therefore devotes more space to an analysis of the influences which went into the final decision-making at Catherine's court. He accepts that Catherine and her advisers were motivated by ideas of "development" in the sense of an "increase in prosperity, productivity and 'happiness'", as understood in eighteenth-century Enlightenment terms, for the whole of society. He notes the existence of conflicting ideas, which Catherine allowed to be openly discussed around her, while reserving the ultimate decision to herself; and he accepts the existence of objective limitations on the freedom of action of the government, which derived from the existing capabilities, administrative and financial, of the Russian state, and from the existing customs and climate of opinion.

Jones's analysis is centred on one particular statesman, Jakob Sievers, and the area of north-west Russia in which he was active. Sievers did not belong to an old noble family (his father had risen in Livonia through his connection with one of Elizabeth's favoured courtiers). But service in the College of Foreign Affairs, including eight years in England, soon developed in him all the habits of thought of an old noble which were grafted on to a pietistic religious background. This is one reason why his attitude to his post was so significant. Sievers was a humanitarian and a reformer *within* the existing social structure. He believed that everyone should serve the public good in the station to which he was called. He was deeply imbued with the sense of the moral responsibility of the noble class for their dependants' "happiness and prosperity". As Jones puts it, he believed that humanitarian actions contributed to progress and that progress itself was humanitarian.

For reasons which Jones is unable to explain adequately, Sievers attracted Catherine's attention, and in 1764 she appointed him governor of the huge province of Novgorod. From that date until 1781 he became one of the empress's closest advisers on local government, particularly during the preparation of the reform of 1775, in which his knowledge of both England and Livonia was drawn upon by Catherine. It is hard to detect in a man of this calibre an exponent of LeDonne's theory of the ruthless exploitation of the socially dependent by a state which was now identified with the noble class. Moreover Sievers cannot readily be allocated to any particular court faction, though his pietistic, Protestant leanings would certainly lead him to gravitate towards those opposed to war, such as N. I. Panin. The subjects which attracted his attention are listed in a memorandum he addressed to Catherine in 1764: "Means of Restoring and Improving the Town of Novgorod; Highways, Water Communications, Cataracts; A New Law Code; Police; Estates; Forests, Wood, Peat, the Rural Economy, and a Society of Economy or Agriculture".

Needless to say, Sievers was not successful in all his projects, and suffered many disappointments. Nevertheless, the broad range of his concept of administration, his conscientiousness, his concern for every class of society (he wished to abolish the poll tax and corporal punishment for commoners) and for the state as a whole mark him out as one of Catherine's great administrators, bold enough even to criticize Potemkin directly to her as unworthy of her trust.

LeDonne and Jones adopt almost diametrically opposed viewpoints in their interpretation of the nature of internal rule in Russia – aristocratic in the first case, bureaucratic in the second. LeDonne argues in so many words that the 1760s saw an anti-bureaucratic trend by means of which "the ruling class sought to eliminate the incipient threat to its supremacy". Yet it was precisely in the 1760s that the civil administration was reformed for the first time in Catherine's reign; the number of officials increased, their salaries were doubled, pensions were introduced and higher standards of conduct were demanded in an effort to professionalize what was still an appendage to military service. "The reforms of 1775–85 broadened the anti-bureaucratic offensive of the ruling class . . .", continues LeDonne, whereas the Act of 1775 again greatly increased the number of permanent officials and backed them up with elected officials, both noble and non-noble – or merely personal nobles, who were not entitled to own land and serfs.

In dealing with Catherine's deliberate choice to promote the development of the Ukraine and the lands annexed from the Porte, Jones and LeDonne start again from opposing viewpoints. Jones explains Catherine's determination to give priority to the economic settlement and development of the Ukraine in strategic and economic terms. This was an area capable of more rapid development than the infertile north-west. LeDonne sees the development of the southern borderlands as an example of a policy directed at enabling a class to enrich itself at the expense of the people.

As is the case with most attempts at a biographical approach in Russian history, Jones has been foiled by lack of evidence about crucial areas of Sievers's life and activity. The autobiographical memorandum he composed for the Ministry of the Interior in 1804 has disappeared, and he is reported to have himself destroyed more than 300 letters from Catherine II. Hence there are gaps in his book, and inconsistencies, some of which are due to carelessness in quotation, translation or dating. Yet, on reading his account of Sievers's determined efforts to achieve what he believed to be genuine progress in the area entrusted to him (the guberniya of Novgorod in 1764 was the size of France), one does really begin to wonder whether Jones and LeDonne are writing about the same country.

A masonic martyr

John Keep

W. GARETH JONES
Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia
273pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521258227

When in 1792 Russia's foremost journalist and literary entrepreneur was arrested as a presumed subversive, his associates destroyed most of his papers; shortly afterwards the police burned his books. As a result Novikov's biographers have had to rely heavily on the testimony he gave under investigation. There has always been doubt as to just where he stood: was he liberal or conservative, a friend or foe of the *philosophes*, an ardent freemason or just a tepid one? His satirical journals and other writings need decoding, since he skilfully masked his true opinions behind those of fictitious "correspondents" and a disinterested editorial persona (in this modelling himself on *The Spectator*). Later Russian writers would elaborate on these evasive techniques.

The natural tendency has been to cast Novikov as an early martyr in the struggle for freedom of expression, as a proponent of autonomous social activity who clashed with the bureaucratic state. In this perspective his earnest advocacy of a Christian moral revival seemed of secondary importance. Bogolyubov, writing in 1916, claimed that his concern with the more esoteric aspects of freemasonry did not make him an obscurantist; and Vernadsky, the movement's historian, even called him a "conservative socialist". Soviet literaray critics have presented Novikov as a champion of progressive ideas who struggled resolutely against autocratic arbitrariness.

The canonical view has lately been called in question by several Western scholars. André Monnier, for instance, depicts Novikov as a *frondeur* and ideologue of Russian nationalism. Gareth Jones now offers a more nuanced and multi-dimensional portrait which covers the subject's entire life, as Monnier's did not, and places him firmly in the European tradition of literary satire. This permits a finer interpretation of the allusive barbs sprinkled so liberally throughout *The Drone* (1769–70) and its immediate sequels. When Novikov lampooned Russian Gallomania, he was not attacking French culture, as might be thought, but only its decadent representatives in Russia and the fops and dandies who so unreflectingly aped Parisian fashions. He wanted his compatriots to discriminate intelligently between good and bad in all the Western models of behaviour to which they were exposed. Similarly, on the plane of ideas, the fruits of reason were acceptable to the extent that they were compatible with the Christian faith. Rejecting materialism and even deism, he believed – as did the Encyclopedists – that the gulf between theology and philosophy could be bridged by recognizing reason as God's gift to man.

Novikov was neither a free-thinker nor a political dissenter. His satirical journals depended on court patronage and emulated the pattern which "the Grandmother", as Catherine playfully called herself, had set in her own journal, *All Sorts*. Certainly, her conception of satire differed from Novikov's; yet the public controversy between them remained good-tempered and should not be misrepresented as a lethal polemic. Even after 1775, when Novikov became a mason, Catherine's attitude was initially one of amused tolerance. In *The Siberian Shaman* and other plays she mocked gently the masons' ritualism, moralistic zeal and naive quest for the lost wisdom of the Orient. But she was also shrewd enough to see that they could pose a security threat. This duly materialized when the Rosicrucians took control and accepted direction from Berlin, where masons enjoyed considerable influence at court. The two powers were at loggerheads over Poland, and Catherine's rebellious heir, Grand Duke Paul, was a noted Prussophile. In seeking Paul's protection for his enterprises Novikov harboured no subversive intent, but the move was risky since it aroused suspicion of "Martinist" sympathies: Catherine could not afford to discriminate.

Jones's account of these complex political manoeuvres is fair-minded and plausible. He also illuminates expertly Novikov's contributions to historical research and his scholastic ventures, which were another bone of contention between the masons and the political establishment. However, we hear regrettably little about his charitable work, notably the actions he took to relieve the famine-stricken peasantry. Nor does he emerge as a credible family man, although his apparently happy marriage (to Alexandra Rimskaya-Korsakova) suggests that Monnier's picture of him as a confirmed misogynist needs revision. How could such a vehement critic of feminine faddism publish, in 1779, a fashion monthly with choice engravings such as "The Flirt on Her Walk" or "Charms Revealed"? Sheer commercialism, perhaps – but difficult to square with his high-minded moralizing. Nor is it clear why Catherine singled out Novikov from his fellow masons in imposing such severe punishment. Jones suggests that she needed a scapegoat and had to appease the hawks in her security apparatus, notably A. A. Prozorovsky, Moscow's governor-general. If so, why did she not sacrifice the whole group? And was her order to burn Novikov's books (which Jones does not mention) another sop to Prozorovsky? It is hard to resist the conventional explanation that an element of personal vindictiveness was involved. Karamzin wrote later that Novikov "did not deserve the dungeon: he was a victim of excusable but unjustified suspicion". It was indeed tragic that the empress, panicking at the revolutionary news from abroad, should have acted so harshly against this pious conservative, a middle-of-the-roader who had done so much to help her nourish that fragile infant, the Russian Enlightenment, in calmer times.

Much will always remain obscure about Novikov: but Gareth Jones has drawn an agreeable and convincing portrait of the man, his milieu and his achievement.

Escape into reality

Gianfranco Poggi

FRANCESCO ALBERONI
Movement and Institution
401pp. Columbia University Press. $58.
023104884X

Francesco Alberoni has been wrestling with this book's theme – the conditions under which social movements emerge and their distinctive internal dynamics – for a long time. His first full-scale treatment of it came out in 1968 as *Statu nascenti* (the title is a Latin expression he derived from Weber, who had probably taken it from – of all things – chemical terminology). At that time Alberoni – originally trained as a physician, and introduced to the social sciences in the psychology laboratory of the Catholic University of Milan – was the head of the recently founded Istituto superiore di sociologia in Trento, the first higher education institution in Italy to award sociology degrees. In his preface to *Statu nascenti* Alberoni had stated, however, that "collective processes had always troubled" him. At that time, and over the next year or so, his position at Trento was to offer him an opportunity, not just to be a privileged observer, but also to involve himself as a visible, vocal, controversial participant in protracted and dramatic "collective processes": for Trento was the scene of some of the most intense manifestations of the *sessantotto studentesco italiano*, the experience of which was to make a profound impact both on Alberoni's intellectual horizons and on his existential posture.

The same theme preoccupied him as he took up his next appointment, a sociology chair at Catania, during the tenure of which he published the first edition (1977) of *Movimento e istituzione*. The second edition, bearing the subtitle *Teoria generale*, came out in 1981, by which time Alberoni had moved to the University of Milan. During the 1970s, his growing activity as publicist (in newspapers, in weekly periodicals, on television) as well as the huge success of a couple of books specifically intended for broader audiences, added public renown to the recognition Alberoni had already gained as a scholar. By tne early 1980s, his gifts as a communicator had gained him a personal prominence unequalled by any Italian sociologist. In the light of this, it seems odd that such a talented and productive man should have remained little known abroad. The present (excellent) translation of the second edition of *Movimento e istituzione* (to which new material has been added) offers English-reading sociologists an overdue opportunity to come to terms with him.

What they will make of this chance I find hard to predict, Alberoni being a rather unconventional sociologist. He freely crosses interdisciplinary boundaries (particularly that between analytic psychology and sociology); he tests the validity of his arguments by means of sometimes lengthy accounts of remote stretches of cultural and religious history; he deals with the heritage of classical sociological thought sparingly and with detachment; and he disdains to discuss contemporary contributions to his subject (Smelser, for instance, is referred to twice, Oberschall never). Nor is it clear which sections of the English-reading audience this book is addressing: the limpid, discursive writing makes it accessible to undergraduates who, however, may find its length daunting; advanced students and dons are more likely to appreciate the scope and subtlety of Alberoni's argument but they will find it a bit diffuse.

It would be a pity, however, if these considerations (or the staggering price of the volume) were to deter prospective readers. For Alberoni conducts here an impressively sustained, original inquiry into an insight, derived primarily from Durkheim and Weber, to the effect that there are two distinctive "states of the social". In the *nascent state*, subjects experience a heightened, open-ended confrontation with themselves and with one another, and jointly seek, in the name of an urgently apprehended vision, to displace the cognitive and emotional boundaries of existent reality. In the *institutional-everyday state*, on the other hand, subjects go on living and partly living within those boundaries, enacting the attendant sanctioned expectations.

The former state is at the centre of Alberoni's concerns. His chief contribution to its analysis is a thoughtful and imaginative reconstruction of the psychological dynamics of the nascent state's "fundamental experience". This consists of the forceful resolution, on the part of at least two subjects (falling in love constitutes according to the author a perfectly plausible, indeed paradigmatic instance of the nascent state), of besetting emotional ambivalences towards existent social objects. The social field is reconstructed by means of new solidarities, leading to a collective relativization of the existent, an exploration of the possible, a challenge to the external system. None of these experiences is destined to last; even when successful (and the formation of a social movement is a necessary though not sufficient condition for success) a nascent state experience leads at best to the instauration of a novel institutional-everyday state.

The book displays other strengths than the thorough elaboration of this conceptual argument. On a number of points Alberoni amplifies, qualifies and corrects the insights of "classical" writers (Weber's on charismatic leadership, for example); he reconsiders imaginatively the themes of social contract theory and constitutionalism from the standpoint of the alternative paths to institutionalization open to successful movements. The book also contains a masterful characterization of the distinctive "cultural civilizations" originating from major historical experiences of the nascent state.

Weaknesses, of course, could also be mentioned. For instance, Alberoni's odd contention that "the everyday-institutional dimension. . . is analyzable in terms of interests and utilitarian patterns" suggests an insufficient appreciation of the nature and scope of normativity; some of his historical cavalcades are rather too hurried; and Alberoni makes no attempt to relate his dichotomy of states of the social with those of others, particularly Giddens's "agency/structure". In the end, however, I can only affirm tht this book constitutes a very considerable addition to the depressingly short current list of literate, historically sensitive, original ventures into sociological theory.

"Central Park 1977", a photograph by Tod Papageorge reproduced from American Images: Photography 1945–1980, *edited by Peter Turner (256pp. Penguin. Paperback, £14.95. 0140079882).*

Wisdom abridged

Stefan Collini

MARTIN BULMER (Editor)
Essays on the History of British Sociological Research
257pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521254779

This is a dispiriting production. It is made up partly of papers given at a symposium on "The British Survey Tradition" at the Sociology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science's 1981 meeting, partly of papers apparently written subsequently, and partly of papers which have already appeared in well-known journals. Almost inevitably, they differ widely in scope, level and quality. For the most part, and despite the book's title, they are only concerned with history in a pretty perfunctory, ancestor-hunting (or, more commonly, ancestor-disowning) way. Booth, Rowntree, Bowley *et al* are dutifully paraded, but the level of historical sophistication and imagination frequently sinks to such patronizing statements as "Booth was unable to dissociate himself from accepted Victorian ideology". Several of the more impressively tough-minded pieces, such as Peter Townsend's brief polemic against the current political treatment of social research, ignore the history of the subject altogether, and are all the better for it. Among the others, Lorraine Baric's thoughtful reflections on social indicators are neither historical nor specifically about Britain, while Edward Shils's widely cited 1960 article, "On the eve", is not about empirical social research. The editor contributes a long introduction which speaks of many things, but which chiefly seems to be preoccupied with the alleged "failure" of empirical social research to gain academic recognition in Britain until recently.

The adventitious, thrown-together quality of the volume has been aggravated by some pretty dubious editorial decisions. To take a small but worrying example: Hannan Selvin's rather slight 1976 article on the non-diffusion of the method of correlation coefficients is reprinted unchanged, but a work published in 1983 has silently been added to its references, though of course it is not referred to or drawn upon in the text. The most disturbing instance of this sort of thing concerns one of the two essays in the book which display real cultural sensitivity combined with elegance of expression: A. H. Halsey's semi-autobiographical account of his generation of LSE-trained sociologists, first published in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*. Bits of this, often particularly telling bits, have been omitted without acknowledgement in several places, as have the entire last eight pages of the original article. The footnotes have been correspondingly reduced, but an explanation of the term "public school" for the original audience has been left in. Moreover, in his introduction Bulmer charges Halsey with seeing the post-war growth of the subject "through slightly rose-tinted spectacles", yet in the omitted pages of his essay Halsey had spoken with a rather engaging pathos of the disappointments which expansion had brought to his generation, concluding far from cheerily that "today sociology and its neighbouring subjects are in disarray of both theories and methods".

The other contribution which stands out for its stylish prose and sheer intellectual quality is by the late Philip Abrams, who died in October 1981 at the age of forty-eight, and to whose memory this book is dedicated. Abrams's rich talents were applied to many areas of sociology and history, more especially to the interplay between them, but he was perhaps best known for his work on the history of British sociology, a subject to which he brought an uncommon panache and clarity of mind. His piece here on "The uses of British sociology 1831–1981" is a characteristically analytical, thought-stirring exploration of the different purposes which have sustained the search for sociological knowledge, often in the face of contradictory criticisms of "relevance" and "uselessness". It concludes with a serious and moving defence of "a social wisdom that has been slowly acquired in a hundred and fifty years of sociological work – a wisdom that is sceptical in its defence of empirical social enquiry, reflexive in its pursuit of objective social analysis, disenchanted in its support for purposive social action". This book seems a sadly poor monument to his memory.

Flirt into scourge

Jill Neville

NICOLA SHULMAN
Social Security
138pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
043469700

Panache and nothing but panache in a book can be like icing without any cake. Michael Arlen tried it with a snobbishness that could only be conceived by a forlorn Armenian. Sardonic jokes, interspersed with the ritual flourish of the cigarette-holder, proliferated during the Depression's darkest years. Nicola Shulman's *Social Security* attempts to keep us smilin' through for 138 pages and, considering what she's joking about, this seems ominous.

Being able to live well on social security takes breeding. To do nothing is the most aristocratic pursuit of all. It is the poor who need money, and they can't even sing for their supper because no one asks them to dinner. Nicola Shulman's over-extended jape is written not for them, of course, but for the broke, or more accurately those "temporarily unfunded", and who are in a position to borrow the £8.95 to buy the book. Its tone will annoy people who have just made a trip round Tower Hamlets, but it will crack a few smiles or even explosive laughs on the faces of canapé-eating "socioholics" whose expressions have not yet frozen into their accustomed unfocused beaming. They will enjoy her zany exaggerations: how the unfunded can extract goodies from the funded (here Shulman's hyperbolic lunacy is endearing); the etiquette at prono movies, with a nice dialogue between "reason" and "soul"; and other elaborate nonsense that should have been harshly edited and published in *Harpers and Queen*, but may one day serve as a useful distorting mirror reflecting our current national emergency.

Is it so bad out there that it has come to fantastical gallows humour? Or is her book all fuelled by self-disgust, or perhaps tribal disgust?

> The youth of today are not an interesting generation. In fact we are spectacularly boring and will be the despair of the future biographers in search of something to say about us . . . . we are all too aware that the nouveau roman, cubism and the washing machine have already been invented by someone else and we are quite at a loss to discover another dimension in time, space or criticism, or to express our paltry individualities by means of anything other than the eyeliner. In other words, we have nothing that is our own to discuss . . . . And as if this were not enough, we now find that we do not work either, and so are deprived of saying "What do you do?"

Can there be a rambling scourge inside the merry flirt?

ANGELA GIANNITRAPANI
FRANCIS PARKMAN E LA FLEUR DE LIS
Napoli: Instituto Universitario Orientale, Bibliopolis 1984
(French and French-Canadian Borrowings in Parkman's Prose. 261pp)
(098)

A glimpse of the edges

Anne Duchêne

A. L. BARKER
No Word of Love
190pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press. £9.50.
0701129000X

This collection contains eleven stories, of which only three have been published before. Their themes, and the narrative stance and tone, vary widely, as we have come to expect of A. L. Barker, but almost all make abrasive and comfortless reading. Those written with, and communicating, the most warmth and geniality tend to be about younger people: boyhood friends falling in love with the same girl; today's sad teenagers on a wet Sunday afternoon; and one tough little boy who tries to find out why another woman's children should have encouraged his father's defection from home. There is also a short, efficiently sardonic piece about a dying old priest who prefers his nurse's hectoring to his parishioners' pious emmollients; and the longest story is a sustained account of a matronly woman's allowing herself to be seduced, at least in her sentiments, by a tricksy adolescent boy.

The rest is harsher comedy. Two or three of the stories are quite horrifying: a woman returns from America after twenty-five years to find that her lover has reduced her closest friend, whom he married, to acting like a fifty-year-old teenage boy; a young priest immures a simple-minded girl in his crypt, to the greater glory of God; a callow and callous young would-be painter inadvertently, as it were, seduces another simple-minded girl. (Simpletons are the extreme form of the raw material of personality, shading down through the incoherent and the inarticulate to the genuine simplicities of the child, which fascinate this writer, because of the problems they present to the rest of us.) There is also a disturbing story about a man who plans knowingly to marry a hysteric; and the title story has a woman going [illegible] after he has had a massive, almost annihilating stroke.

Such variety suggests a very confident insight and a bold felicity of writing. Many readers have found these to their satisfaction in A. L. Barker over her long career ("Criticism is almost superfluous", carols one of our sager journals about her last novel, on the jacket of this book). Others may have found that the slight anxiety with which everything tends to be enamelled communicates itself to their own minds. Will she bring it off again this time? Or is she in fact, despite the boldness of her gesture, innately too modest? Those of us who remember the sure but cautious promise of her first book, *Innocents*, back in 1951, must now and then wonder if its winning the first Somerset Maugham Prize may not have entangled her in a convention of polite writing from which she has never quite worked free. One feels that she has reserves of laughter and warmth which remain too tightly buttoned up; as well as a sinister, individual view of the horrifying edges of the human mind, which she only allows to be briefly glimpsed before returning home to the side of the angels.

Sometimes the politeness leads to unhappy constriction, as, here, on the first page, in the story, "Eve", about the artist and the simple country girl. The first line tells us the hero was *making* "an unsteady living modelling for knitting leaflets and true-story magazines", though six lines on we learn that "as a model he was much in demand; if anything, he was overexposed". Between which, there are accurate notes on how his good looks "could be reorientated by a hair-parting. With earburns and a divide down the middle he was quite the devil, but bring the comb across to one temple and he became a clean-limbed fellow. Give him a quiff and he was every mother's son."

This at least prepares us not to like him much, but confusion sets in in the second paragraph:

> Those were the days, the 1930s, when young men parted their hair. There was *no other special virtue in the period*, but it is *feasible – more feasible* anyway – to suppose that there were still people in existence then who combined social ignorance and *primeval know-how*. It would be fairly incredible nowadays. Young people on outlying farms – if there are any young people on outlying farms – *are* so much more forward. *When everything is a marketable commodity*, and they even *see their sex changing hands all the time*, who would have the gall, let alone the naivety, to try to tell them that miracles only happen once?

The italics are inserted, of course, at points where the writing seems particularly under strain. This is not the moment to debate these [illegible] rhetorically, not is there any suggestion that all the stories lend themselves to such treatment. (This extract is, indeed, untypically blurred, where good manners elsewhere make for angularity.) Only, it is and to sense that a writer of what might have been quite remarkable strength has sacrificed too much of herself on the altar of "correctness". One feels it would be splendid if now she allowed herself a publish-and-damn-their-eyes vein, and allowed us to see her without these inhibitions.

Perfectly Nice People

Toby Fitton

ISABEL COLEGATE
A Glimpse of Sion's Glory
153pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241115329

The three stories making up this collection seem rather awkward at their chosen length; the introduction of subsidiary plots and a portentousness of general intention are not well suited to fifty-page *contes*, and Isabel Colegate's could have done with either pruning or considerable development. They are loosely connected by the theme of how particular moments of revelation – anthropological, intellectual and artistic-sexual – affect the very varied characters, but there is wisely no forced attempt at linkage.

One tale deals with the catalytic effect the arrival of a girl who "had lived among artists" has on an oddly assorted household in pre-war Bath. The social observation is good, and enough is made of the snobberies of the landlady, Mrs Wilson Clark, a jute-wallah's widow with connections in the dental world, refugee academic paying guests and a dreary daughter, for our not to have needed a substantial preliminary discourse on the reduced-gentry upbringing of her bicycle-repairer lodger. There are some good touches: "'Do you mean', said Hilda Behr in surprise, 'she is a daughter of the bourgeoisie?' 'Certainly not', said Mrs Wilson Clark, to whom the word was unfamiliar. 'They were Perfectly Nice People.'" The tension is social rather than emotionnl, great though the havoc is that the arty-tarty gipsy girl wreaks.

"Distant Cousins" is about one of the published fantasies of a science fiction writer coming true, during an encounter near his writing retreat in Italy with the sole survivor of a remote Russian tribe of lean, elegant, hypersensitive and four-digited supermen. This unique example of an entirely distinct "human" species, preserved by an anthropology student as a specimen when communal self-immolation destroyed his brethren and their celestial city after exposure to the intrusions of western scientific investigators, has been reduced to feeble-mindedness. He has preserved, nevertheless, a demonstrable sweetness of character, and enough capacity for harmonious ecstasy to show that but for the brash attentions of the anthropologists, his genetically different intellectual race might have offered possibilities of Redemption to mere humankind.

"A Glimpse of Sion's Glory" tells of an ambassador's wife, over-elaborately set against a conventional diplomatic background, receiving a confessional, autobiographical letter, deeply affectionate and deeply disturbing, from an old Oxford friend whom she and her duller husband had kept up with throughout the vagaries of his brilliantly promising but unfulfilled career. He has known undergraduate success, an All Souls fellowship, social high jinks, drug experiments in communes, clever books on various subjects, medical studies and media exposure – all that a "busy mechanical apparatus" in his head can lead to – and they have secured him a revival as a cult figure among the young. In contrast to all this brittle achievement is the solidity of his correspondent's country-house upbringing, London social life, and stable but boring marriage to a career diplomat.

The contrasting biographies are intended to be so nicely complementary as to make more convincing the middle-aged prodigy's declaration of a hitherto understated love. This they fail to do, but the distance between the two principal characters makes the culmination of his life – a defection to Russia had prompted what was intended to be read as a suicide note – a little less unreal. The freelance intellectual's personality deserved exploration at greater length; as it is, one cannot help feeling some sympathy with the ambassador husband's description of the political defection of his Oxford friend as "the ultimate frivolity" of a wasted talent.

South-west of Eden

Jeanette Winterson

PENELOPE FARMER
Eve, Her Story
192pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0575035846

The business of fiction is to mingle elements, familiar or not, in order to create a new impression. If a writer invents a plot, he or she is at liberty to throw in folk with blue pointed ears or to call the seat of domestic anarchy Tunbridge Wells. What the writer mingles may not work, but there are no constraints to begin with.

Creating a new impression through changes to an already existing plot is more dangerous and more tempting; Lucifer fell for it. It is tempting because breaking up a familiar pattern has a more substantial effect than suggesting a novel one to begin with; and dangerous because most existing plots are jealously guarded by the collective consciousness. Nobody really approves of a feminist re-writing of the Cinderella story unless it's done so well that the new impression is irresistible; and while the Bible is no more sacred, it should be approached with some caution, if only because it has shaped and informed even the most rigorously iconoclastic imagination. It has this power because it is metaphor, not allegory, because it speaks largely and often obscurely rather than specifically.

When retelling a Bible story, or any myth, the power must remain and in the case of Penelope Farmer's *Eve, Her Story*, the power has been lost in a relentless pursuit of detail. It's very nice to read about the contents of the garden of Eden and what the animals do, and there are a number of significant plot changes that are interesting in themselves: Lilith returns to the garden to find Eve, and a triangular relationship develops between Adam and the two women that demonstrates how suburbia existed before the Fall. Indeed, if it were not for the exotic-fruit erotica, you'd swear the earthly paradise was in Surrey. There's a lot of meaningful fruit in this novel, and none more laden with allegory than Farmer's figs. The figs are the really tempting things in Eden, although the serpent prefers oranges, Lilith likes a mango and Adam doesn't mind as long as it's picked for him. The serpent, who is the one splendid aspect of the whole book, warns Eve that she will never understand death unless she eats the fig; Eve wants to understand and so she takes a risk against Jehovah and the garden party rules . . . The rest is history.

The book falls flat because the methods Farmer employs to amplify the story we already know are not imaginative enough to create a new impression. More detail is not more power. In his excellent book *The Great Code: The Bible as literature*, Northrop Frye contends that any attempt to explain a myth, to make it allegorical and functional, sucks out its value. It may be better to turn the thing on its head, to dismantle the elements and use them in a completely new context than to reduce a grand and curious archetype to the level of the everyday.

The pull of the past

J. K. L. Walker

LAURENCE LERNER
My Grandfather's Grandfather
156pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.50.
0436244438

Taking as his vantage-point a South London family in the mid-1970s, Laurence Lerner sets out in his new novel to demonstrate the nature of the threads that bind generations together and the ways in which they can be loosened. The household in Clapham escapes the statistical norm: Jeremy Harrison, whose First in philosophy and skill at chess sit uneasily with his drop-out job in a tax office to produce a knowing, drab uninvolvement; his mother Hannah, who has never married and keeps the family going through her job as a nurse; and Grandfather Harrison, now in his late seventies, still exemplifying the old-fashioned virtues. "It's the past that made us what we are", he claims. "We weren't made yesterday" – a past which, in his own case, is composed equally of the now almost mythic figure of his own grandfather, whose life spanned most of the nineteenth century, and of the forty years he himself spent in South Africa after emigrating at the age of twelve on the tide of Anglo-Boer reconciliation in 1910.

Irony overhangs the narrative of Harrison's life in South Africa as narrated to and processed by his grandson for the reader. With his affectionately patronizing arguments Jeremy seeks to force the tale of his grandfather's simple love for Hester Theron, the schoolmistress daughter of an Afrikaans farmer, into a modern frame of reference: As the couple are married, Jeremy chides the old man, with feminist hindsight, for having cut off Hester's career; Harrison's job as a zoo keeper is equated with Afrikaner paternalism towards the Blacks. The story flicks easily backwards and forwards between past and present, with Lerner maintaining a delicately humane stance: Jeremy's mother is born, at the outbreak of the Second World War, Hester dies of a brain-tumour, the scene on her death-bed duplicating the struggle between Harrison and the Therons that marked Hannah's birth; in 1950 Harrison draws the line under forty years of his life when he brings the pregnant Hannah back to England.

As Jeremy's own story comes to the fore, parallels begin to emerge with his grandfather's life. The homosexuality that Jeremy has kept hidden from his family, and in particular his relationship with Michael, a young businessman, is finally brought out into the open after an outing to Brighton. Here, a wordless encounter on the pier in the presence of the grandfather is seen as the counterpart of Harrison's inarticulate yet positive declaration of love for Hester during an early-morning walk on the veldt. The apparent sacrifice of her career to marriage now appears differently to Jeremy as he prepares to give up everything to accompany Michael to a new life in South Africa. It is parental – or grandparental – attachment, rather than ambition, that is sacrificed on this altar. South Africa, too, which has provided Jeremy with three-quarters of the blood in his veins, exercises its pull, drawing him back, as the half-forgotten England of his grandfather's childhood, embodied perhaps in the image of his own grandfather, called back the old man after forty years. That, too, is something Jeremy is abandoning:

> I felt proud of my grandfather's gratitude, and how English he was, but all the same I was leaving him behind . . . If that old man couldn't keep me in England, nothing could. He would have to be the one to keep my grandfather company now.

Despite its short compass and deceptively simple style, *My Grandfather's Grandfather* packs in a great deal of incident and reflection. The novel owes much of its success to an elegantly counterpointed narrative technique and to the ironies it sustains. And by modestly asserting the inescapability of hereditary forces in shaping human relationships, Lerner looks to an older and perhaps truer pattern than that proposed by the social engineers.

English and American virtues

Neil Philip

DAVID REES
Painted Desert, Green Shade: Essays on contemporary writers of fiction for children and young adults
197pp. Horn Book (distributed by Images, 16 Cecil Court, London WC2). £13.95.
087675 2865

This book follows much the same lines as the author's previous collection of essays, *The Marble in the Water*, 1980. It offers straightforward surveys and evaluations of the work of thirteen leading contemporary children's writers: seven American and six English. David Rees – himself a children's novelist – has shucked off some of the naivety and imprecision that marred the first book, and his arguments here will prove stimulating to anyone concerned with modern children's fiction. A particular improvement on the first collection is Rees's alert cross-referencing and comparisons, so that one is left with the feeling that, despite the previous appearance of many of these pieces in scattered publications, this is a coherent body of thinking about a unified subject, rather than a series of studies in a vacuum.

Recently, theories about the status of written narratives and the role of the reader have been informing some of the most stimulating children's book criticism, in the work of writers such as Margaret Meek, Jacqueline Rose and Peter Hunt. David Rees, however, prefers plain-speaking about his likes and dislikes: he offers judgments of quality at every turn, even in comparison. Concerning Jane Langton's *The Fledgling*, for instance, he writes, "Penelope Farmer's first novel, *The Summer Birds*, is concerned with a similar theme, but it is not as well written". Such assurance, which might seem overbearing or simply foolish, is refreshing in the context of an English writer's championship of an American whose work remains almost unknown in Britain. One senses Rees's indignation that writers of the quality of Jane Langton and M. E. Kerr have not had due recognition on this side of the Atlantic.

The question of differences in creative and critical attitudes between Britain and America is one which Rees might usefully have explored in an introductory or concluding essay, for it is begged on almost every page. Because they are written in approximately the same language, there is a tendency to regard the two literatures as one: Rees, precisely because he can respond equally to quiet English virtues or clamorous American ones, shows how mistaken this is. In this book the mediating figure between the "painted desert" of Virginia Hamilton and the "green shade" of Lucy Boston is Russell Hoban, an American living and working in Britain, about whom Rees has a number of interesting things to say.

Rees's commentary is not always up to date and this sometimes causes problems. In many ways, the most satisfactory, and the most considered, piece in the book is that on Lucy Boston, an author whose *oeuvre* can now be seen as a whole. This essay is an eloquent appreciation of a writer whose virtues are too often taken for granted but, disappointingly, it makes no reference to her adult fiction, and no use of her two volumes of autobiography. At the end of each essay, Rees lists those books and essays to which he has referred in the text, but offers no guidance on further reading, so that those unfamiliar with the journal literature cannot pursue his arguments. It would have been helpful in the case of Lucy Boston, for instance, to direct readers at least to Aidan Chambers's discussion of her prose style and its implications in his essay "The Reader in the Book" in *The Signal Approach to Children's Books*, 1980.

The two most challenging essays are those on Ted Hughes and Robert Westall. In the essay on Hughes (which relics heavily on Hughes's lecture and essay "Myth and Education" without, irritatingly, giving any indication that this exists in two substantially different texts) Rees puts forward the unorthodox view that Hughes's children's poetry shows the writer "floundering", and that Hughes is significant for children's literature not as a poet but as a theorist and storyteller. In the essay on Westall, Rees pursues a less individual line, arguing strongly against the macho brutality of Westall's vision and the crudity of his prose. He writes that Westall's work is "constantly praised by teachers and critics", but this is only half true. Teachers and librarians do champion Westall, but I cannot think of a single sustained critical defence of his work. The truth is that his pulsing narratives, with their potent and ambiguous mixture of sexual voyeurism and gloating violence, recognize, appeal to and exploit an area of the teenage imagination left severely alone by the refined gentility of many critical favourites. The tension between adolescent enjoyment of his work and adult distaste for it would be a fruitful subject for analysis.

Rees offers no radical new perspective or illuminating close analysis; he is, at times, rather pedestrian in his approach. Nevertheless his unpretentious stance is a valuable reminder that the critic must be a reader first; Rees's reports of his own reading are honest and direct, even when most disconcertingly simplistic.

Enchanted places

Isabel Quigly

HUMPHREY CARPENTER
Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of children's literature
235pp. Allen and Unwin. £12.95.
0 04 809022 0

That the *hortus conclusus* is a powerful image is so obvious it hardly needs emphasizing. Image of what? Of secrecy, remoteness and the exotic within the familiar and quotidian; of a mixture of the wild and the tamed, being out of doors yet room-like, open to the sky yet hidden; of social exclusiveness – only an already large garden can accommodate a secret one, only a well-placed house can assure the secrecy of its walled garden (the walled gardens of terraced houses, being overlooked by the neighbours, obviously don't count). Going further, it is a symbol of the untouched, therefore of virginity; in art, more specifically, of portraits of the Virgin and Child; in poetry, in all fantasy, in much adult writing, in many people's private mythologies it stands for so much that is ancient and arcadian that to list the images it suggests takes one too far into the territory of dream and myth.

That *The Secret Garden* is the title of a much-loved children's book – some years ago, in a newspaper poll of child readers, it was placed favourite of *all* children's books – is a piece of luck for the author of *Secret Gardens* because it sums up much that he is trying to say. Subtitled "The Golden Age of children's literature" (Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age* is another central book on the same theme), it is a study of a number of children's writers who used imaginatively the idea of an arcadian world, in some cases small-scale and concentrated, circumscribed by their own psychological conditions, in others more open to the sky, an extension of their own longings; in nearly all a strongly envisaged world not so much of innocence as of perfection, of commitment to a vision of a time and place where everything could be right, responsive and fulfilled.

Humphrey Carpenter starts with Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* and ends with A.A. Milne and Pooh. In between come the Victorians and Edwardians who, in the secret-garden context, count: Lewis Carroll and George Macdonald, Edward Lear, Richard Jefferies and Kenneth Grahame, Beatrix Potter, Frances Hodgson Burnett, J. M. Barrie; more peripherally, Louisa Alcott and E. Nesbit. (In an epilogue, "The Garden Revisited", he deals with J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and some modern writers; most importantly Philippa Pearce whose *Tom's Midnight Garden* is seen as the antidote to *Peter Pan*, because time and change and the need to grow up are given their due.) These writers were so eccentric, particularly for their time, and often so tormented by their natures and everyday lives, that one wonders if good children's writers, or at least good fantasists of the gardening sort, are possible without a strong dose of torment, oddity, even madness. If their secret lives had [illegible]

Children's Literature 13: The Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature (228pp. Yale University Press. £30, paperback £9.95. 0 300 033 19 2) contains essays on Grimm's Fairy Tales, Tintin, *Charlotte's Web* and Michel Tournier.

Small traditions

Sarah Wintle

FRANCELIA BUTLER and RICHARD ROTERT (Editors)
Reflections on Literature for Children
281pp. Library Professional Publications (distributed by Clio Distribution Services, 55 St Thomas's Street, Oxford OX1 1JG). £30.16.
0208020756

The academic activity surrounding the acceptance of children's literature as a subject for scholarly study has recently been portrayed in Alison Lurie's novel *Foreign Affairs* (1984). While some inevitably consider it a "waste of public funds" and an egregious example of "useless scholarship", the subject none the less attracts a "large if not equally brilliant mass of undergraduates". Many of these, it may safely be assumed prefer reading and writing about *Winnie the Pooh* or *Treasure Island* to *The Faerie Queene* or *Daniel Deronda*. The novel's heroine, an American academic, is herself in London on a grant in order to make a comparative study of English and American play rhymes, for she values highly "the ancient and precious folk-culture of childhood". During her stay in London she compiles a reading list for a semi-literate engineer from Oklahoma, a list which will introduce him to literature through children's books, in particular books by Stevenson, Grahame, Barrie, Tolkien, and T. H. White, all of them, it might be noted, British.

This collection of essays, all first published in the journal *Children's Literature* bears out the accuracy of Lurie's observations. There is an essay by Lurie herself on Pooh Corner as a counter-culture paradise and another by one of the editors on "The Poetry of Rope-Skipping". Many contributions touch on the relation of children's stories to folk-culture, from an interview with Isaac Bashevis Singer through a piece on Pinnochio by a Jungian priest to a description of Brother Blue, a charismatic black story-teller and street actor with a Harvard Ph.D. Others perform standard and well-drilled critical exercises on simple texts, often to bathetic effect. There is talk of the naive narrator in *Jemima Puddleduck* or the Heideggerian (*sic*) authenticity of the spider in *Charlotte's Web*. In addition there are several contributions of historical and documentary interest: a memoir of E. Nesbit, an account of Ruskin's friendship with Kate Greenaway and a short unpublished story by George Macdonald.

Most of the writers whose work is discussed in the volume are British but the more interesting contributions are those which address themselves to less familiar American works. Martin Williams and Roger Sale both write about books for younger children and raise questions of national origins. Williams writes about the Raggedy Ann books by Johnny Gruelle. He argues convincingly for both their quality and their Americanness and indeed suggests that the two are closely connected. As Bashevis Singer observes in the interview with him, "The more a story is connected with a group, the more specific it is, the better it is."

Roger Sale, in an essay in which he interrogates memories of his own childhood reading, brings to attention both the value and number of the books written by Frank Baum, known internationally by the single book of his that has been filmed: *The Wizard of Oz*. Sale makes some interesting points too about their Americanness in relation to the Englishness of A.A. Milne's books and the Frenchness of Jean de Brunhoff's Babar books. Sale is less convincing when he suggests that his childhood liking for these three authors can be linked directly to his adult tastes, but his essay does raise some large questions about children and books that some of the other contributions fail to acknowledge.

One of these inevitably is the relationship between what children like and what adults like, between the way children read and the way adults read. P.L. Travers makes the now traditional claim that she writes to please herself, for children will always take just what they want from the book-case. John Seelye in an essay "Notes on the Waist-high Culture" speaks of appropriation and suggests that as in the past children appropriated parts of *Robinson Crusoe* so now they appropriate films rather than books. His is the only contribution to raise the issue of modern popular culture as opposed to an older folk-culture, but then this whole collection is really a text-book aimed at young adults who have appropriated children's literature for their own purposes. Like Alison Lurie's engineer they will read it as a way in to mainstream adult literature and also to the mastery of standard critical discourses. Unlike black, gay or women's studies, the study of children's literature, to judge by this book, leads straight back to great traditions. Some of the better students may go on to read *The Faerie Queene* and *Daniel Deronda* after all.

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The indignities of the text

John Sutherland

BARRY MENIKOFF
Robert Louis Stevenson and The Beach of Falesá: A study in Victorian publishing, with the original text
199pp. Edinburgh University Press. £17.50.
0 85224 498 3

The Beach of Falesá is highly ranked by Stevenson's admirers. Told in his own often ungrammatical and sometimes blasphemous words by a South Seas trader, the novella opens with the bogus wedding of the hero and an illiterate native beauty, Uma. Such marriages of brutal sexual convenience were common, Stevenson noted in one of his travel accounts. In the story, as originally written, the certificate cherished by the deceived woman declares that she "is illegally married to Mr John Wiltshire for one night, and Mr John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next morning". Subsequently Wiltshire discovers that he in turn has been tricked by the fellow trader who set up the marriage charade with him. Uma is tabooed, and none of the natives will now deal with him. Instead of discarding his concubine, as a hard-headed business man should, he finds he loves her, makes her his honest wife in a genuine Christian ceremony, and finally defeats his rival in a fight to the death in the jungle.

Stevenson wrote *Falesá* between 1890 and 1891, and sent the manuscript to Europe for publication. At this time, there were at least three official and semi-official plenipotentiaries acting for him. Most high-handed was his friend and literary counsellor, Sidney Colvin. Colvin took it upon himself to remove some two hundred words of an interpolated "yarn" in the first chapter, which Barry Menikoff puts into print here for the first time. Colvin disapproved of Stevenson's love-affair with the South Seas, and undervalued any writing inspired by the place. Stevenson's official *literary agent* was Charles Baxter, an admirable middleman who restricted himself to getting the best possible deal for his author. (At this stage of his career Stevenson was making as much as $20,000 a year from his writing.) *Falesá* was leased by Baxter to the syndicating agency S. S. McClure, for eventual serialization in the *Illustrated London News* (July–August 1892). Thereafter, Cassell purchased the right to bring out the work in book form in England, Scribner's in America.

Periodical serialization at this time was notoriously subject to editorial interference. The editor of the *ILN*, Clement Shorter, took it on himself to drop the offending marriage certificate altogether. (As he explained later, it was unfit for "general family reading". Nevertheless, his paper carried some fine full-page illustrations of the bare-bosomed Uma, more aphrodisiac to the Victorian lad, one imagines, than any number of desecrations of holy writ.) Among other minor bowdlerizations, "mother-naked" was removed from a description of native children playing, and some of Wiltshire's cursing was watered down. Stevenson was more upset by the numerous "misprints abominable" that marred his text. He mended a set of proofs sent out to him around December 1892 for the Cassell's edition, which was duly published, to his taste presumably, in April following. But the English publisher, although he restored the offending marriage certificate, balked at "one night" and insisted on the false union running a week. This apparently allowed Wiltshire to tire of Uma's cooking, rather than just her body. Stevenson good-naturedly conceded the alteration.

The censorship of *Falesá* is in line with the practice of the times, and matches the indignities visited at the same period on Hardy's *Tess*. Since the 1950s, an "unexpurgated" *Falesá* has been available – most conveniently in Jenni Calder's Penguin English Library edition. But restoration, as Menikoff sees it, requires more than simply putting back the one-night marriage certificate, plus the odd Victorian expletive. In his view, the vandalizing of Stevenson's text lies not in the relatively few substantive excisions, but the multitudinous accidental changes in punctuation, spelling and syntax which still disfigure the standard editions of the novella. In a [illegible] he supplies us here with a faithful transcript of the fifty-eight-page holograph manuscript (now in the Huntington Library). Accompanying this pristine text is a 100-page introduction, indicting the Victorian publishing industry for its treatment of *Falesá*.

Menikoff has provided a valuable service to Stevenson's readers. But his introductory argument is so angry | with | the | nineteenth-century book trade as to unbalance itself. According to Menikoff, *Falesá* was – for its contemporaries – an alarmingly seditious text which "undermined the ethos of imperial England". Its realism "subverted widely held prejudices about the superiority of white European civilizations to brown-skinned peoples; it raised a violent, semiliterate Englishman to the level of a hero; and it connected the white and brown worlds through the illicit coupling of the hero with a native girl." Therefore, Menikoff alleges, everyone connected with the production of *Falesá* tacitly conspired to geld the work by imposing Queen's English and Queen's grammar on Wiltshire's insubordinate vernacular.

As he candidly admits, Menikoff embarked on his research with the expectation of discovering a single villain – and originally cast Sidney Colvin in the role. But there is no clear evidence that – much as he disliked Stevenson's South Seas material – Colvin systematically damaged his friend's novel. His main offence (in Stevenson's view) was to arrange to have *Falesá* published in a joint volume with the inappropriately sprightly *The Bottle Imp*. Clearly Clement Shorter acted like the busybody he was – but magazine serialization was regarded by Stevenson and his contemporaries as a degrading sideshow to the real business of literature. The *ILN* text was in no sense principal.

The villain that Menikoff ends up with is more or less the entire Victorian publishing apparatus and its lowest functionaries in the publishing office and printing-shop. These unknown labourers, executing the unspoken commands of their bosses, supposedly got together to neutralize Stevenson's threat to the Empire and white supremacy. "There was no simple way a compositor, proofreader, editor or publisher could contravene the meaning of the story, short of destroying it altogether. The most reasonable procedure was therefore to manipulate the language, which was systematically gutted through additions, deletions and substitutions." One's hopes of some startling revelation are dashed by Menikoff's next paragraph, which states that "the manipulation of Stevenson's language begins with the deletion of the letter *s* at the end of words". And, we discover, it is only a dozen intermittent and inconsistent droppings of the letter *s* that he can come up with. When he descends in this way from prosecuting oratory to hard evidence Menikoff's argument takes some swallowing. The notion that reparagraphing, the lowercasing of capitals or taking liberties with Stevenson's hyphenation constitutes a pro-imperialist textual sabotage is barely plausible. The diagnosis of "racism expressed in the minutiae of altered indefinite articles and personal pronouns" is, on the face of it, similarly questionable. If this was the case, why did Stevenson himself not dig his heels in? Why at the end of 1892 did he pass for publication a proof copy of the Cassell edition in which malign correction (if that is what it was) must have been obvious to him? Menikoff's answer is uncompromising – Stevenson himself was part of the conspiracy to suppress Stevenson's text. In a concluding *j'accuse*, he alleges "the abuse of art by Stevenson himself in sanctioning the publication of a corrupt text". And the saviour of "art", riding in ninety years later, is the purifying editorial critic.

It is quite possible to read *Falesá* in its earlier printed forms, and take most of its artistic message. The best criticism of the novel that I have seen is A. B. Walkley's review in *Black and White* (May 13, 1893, usefully reprinted in Paul Maixner's Critical Heritage volume, 1981). Walkley unerringly picks on all the qualities of the text which Menikoff argues were suppressed by "mutilation". Nor is it entirely convincing that *Falesá* was a uniquely dangerous text, singularly treated by the Victorian book trade so as to reveal their prejudice in unwonted nakedness. To substantiate the claims he makes about suppressive malpractice, Menikoff would need more examples. (A "control" Stevenson text, neutral ideologically, and impeccably treated by the same merchandisers and their artisans, for instance.)

A section of commentary reproduced from The Ashkenazi Haggadah, *reviewed below.*

Nevertheless, Menikoff has discovered a crime, and identified a corporate culprit even if his imputation of motive is unconvincing. As he shows, the stylistic surface of *Falesá* was extraordinarily raked over by hands other than Stevenson's. The force of Menikoff's argument lies in his passionate conviction that there is no such thing as an accidental. All changes to what the artist wrote are – in his view – matters of artistic life and death. Menikoff is evidently of that puritan school of editors who believe that the novel falls, the moment it leaves the novelist's hands. It justifies a policy which would have authoritative texts to be literal copies of what the author originally put on paper. As with *Falesá*, the most numerous changes routinely made to the author's copy in production were punctuational. Many scholars who have worked with Victorian fiction have noted how idiosyncratically good their author's punctuation is, and how it is altered for the worse by standardizing house styles. Authors of the period apparently accepted this repackaging as a fact of commercial life, just as they usually ceded choice of fount, binding and paper to the publisher. Reading *Falesá* in the aboriginal form to which Menikoff has returned it makes a strong case for considering the great Victorian novelists as wards of editorial court, and resisting, as they should have resisted, the well (or as Menikoff would have it, fiendishly ill) intentioned tidy-mindedness of their employers.

But much as one would like to, there are problems in accepting the second half of this book as a model for future editors. For reasons he does not explain, Menikoff disdains all conventional textual apparatus. He gives no clear account of the transmission of *Falesá* in its published versions, nor any full description of the manuscript he is transcribing. The variants which are central to his argument are not annotated; unless he undertakes the task of collation himself, all the reader has are the examples cited in the polemical introduction. Menikoff does not record legible deletions in the manuscript. (There is, for instance, a whole lightly crossed-out paragraph at the end of the narrative.) I suspect that in this circumvention of normal editorial practice Menikoff was aiming at unimpeded legibility for the layman reader. But his informality diminishes the scholarly authority of an otherwise usefully regenerated text.

The service of the feast

R. A. May

DAVID GOLDSTEIN (Editor)
The Ashkenazi Haggadah: A Hebrew manuscript of the mid-15th century from the collections of the British Library written and illuminated by Joel Ben Simeon called Feibusch Ashkenazi, with a commentary attributed to Eleazar ben Judah of Worms
40pp, with 98pp colour facsimile. Thames and Hudson. £40.

The title and subtitle say it all. Well, nearly all; if you know that a Haggadah is the service-book which regulates the order of the festive celebration held at home by a Jewish family unit on the eve of Passover; and that Ashkenazi denotes the geographical and cultural ambience of the Jews of France and Germany.

Since the genre of the facsimile illuminated Haggadah is well established, it is pertinent, and in all sincerity in no way impertinent, to adapt the best-known passage in the Haggadah itself and ask, "Why is this facsimile Haggadah different from all other facsimile Haggadot?" Again following the Haggadah, we may give four answers. First, the imposing dimensions of the volume. The leaves of the original measure 14½" × 10", allowing exceptional scope for the artist to utilize the ample margins for his illuminations and for enclosing the commentary in a whole variety of animal, geometrical and allusive shapes, and to place unusually large decorated initial words within the text area. Second, no other scribe, who in this case is also the artist, is connected with so many medieval illuminated Hebrew manuscripts: eleven manuscripts have Joel ben Simeon's name in their colophon, while three others have been attributed to him (not all with equal conviction). There are indications that not all of this Haggadah is from Joel's own hand, but even if he cannot be regarded as its only begetter he was certainly its prime mover. Third, David Goldstein's edition includes a full transcription and translation of the commentary on the Haggadah attributed to Eleazar of Worms. Whereas the Hebrew Bible exercises a perennial fascination and contemporary Israeli authors find no lack of translators, medieval Hebrew texts are by comparison somewhat neglected. It is therefore a real service to make available an integral medieval text together with an English version – even if, as in this instance, the work is not wholly by the highly regarded Eleazar, it is not the fullest recension in existence and it is not the most significant of commentaries. Fourth, this is possibly the finest medieval German Haggadah extant.

The transcribed Hebrew texts and the English translations are preceded by "The Book and its History". In this introduction's most important sections Dr Goldstein gives a scholarly and balanced account of the complex problems of Joel's participation in the works attaching to his name, and of his movements; and provides descriptions and explanations of the illuminations for the benefit of those who wish to understand what the artist intends to convey.

The style of the translation, however, is disappointing. Goldstein is an experienced translator, and is capable of a deft turn of phrase, as is evident throughout this volume; but he is also often pedestrian and literal to the point of obscurity. For example, the meaning of the following may be hardly evident to someone who does not already know the Hebrew text of the Haggadah well: "Since he excludes himself from the generality he has denied the basic principle". Elsewhere the reader is left to flounder: what layman knows the meaning of "the ten *sefiroth belimah*"? Further, I would take issue with some of the renderings; one example must suffice; on p 34 we find, "I spoke harshly and I was answered [*ne'eneti*] by you". The idiom *na'aneti lekha* means "I beg your pardon", "I apologize".

But these are small failings and the volume in its handsome slipcase is a sumptuous product. The facsimile plates are expertly reproduced, and anyone who has handled original manuscripts of this kind instantly recognizes the authentic feel, the charisma and, in the case of a Haggadah, the ravages of time, wine and repeated feasts. The editor, the publisher and the British Library can take some pride in having produced the latest in a distinguished line of facsimile Haggadot.

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For keeping's sake

Anthony Hobson

SOPHIE MALAVIEILLE
Reliures et cartonnages d'éditeur en France au XIXe siècle (1815–1865)
253pp. Paris: Promodis. 450fr.
2903181 395
GRAHAM POLLARD
Early Bookbinding Manuals
60pp. Oxford Bibliographical Society, Bodleian Library, Oxford OX1 3BG. £5.
0901420409

The French are fond of claiming that "La reliure est un art tout français", but in the nineteenth-century development of publisher's bindings it was generally the English who led and the French who followed. The English side of the story has been broadly known since Michael Sadleir's and John Carter's pioneer studies of the early 1930s. The French side is now presented in Sophie Malavieille's well-documented book, *Reliures et cartonnages d'éditeur en France au XIXe siècle (1815–1865)*, which started life as a thesis on a subject suggested by Henri-Jean Martin. That it has appeared in small folio format with reproductions of over 150 covers in colour or monochrome is due to the bibliographical enthusiasm of Jean-Pierre Vivet of Promodis, its publisher.

The first English publisher's binding, of printed boards – leaving aside such odd phenomena as Camden's *Annales* (1625), Howell's *Dodona's Grove* (1650) and some editions of the *Eikon Basilike* – dates from 1807 at latest. The earliest French example is on an almanac of 1812. Book cloth was invented by William Pickering in 1825. The French started importing it from England about ten years later and for most of the century it remained superior to the French product. The first cloth binding blocked in gilt, though only on the spine, was Volume Three of Byron's *Works*, published by John Murray in 1832. France may perhaps have been ahead in designing special plaques for covers, though the first instance was on the translation of an English book, a pointer to the source of inspiration. Cloth blocked with a plaque in gilt continued to be known as *cartonnage anglais*.

Publisher's bindings, or rather cases, were needed because publishing had entered into a new phase of mass production. Cases were manufactured in bulk in separate establishments and delivered to the publishing houses to be attached to the printed sheets. By the middle of the century operations were on a vast scale. Martial Ardant frères, of Limoges, the only publishers of the period whose records survive, bought as much as 5,500 metres of cloth at a time. They employed twenty-four binding-shops in Limoges and in 1854 alone ordered 297,000 board cases (*cartonnages*) from one Paris firm. Companies tried to reduce costs by combining all the processes of manufacture in one concern. Publishers like Alfred Mame of Tours or Martial Ardant frères eventually established their own binderies, while Antoine Maitre, who had set up as a binder in Dijon in 1830 with a capital of 300 francs, began publishing prayer-books in 1844, and by 1860 was employing 550 men, women and children in his binding shop.

The French *cartonnages* were of glazed paper boards, gilt, embossed and coloured in neo-classic, Romantic or Gothic styles. They were designed to satisfy the needs of a new reading public for elegant objects that made no serious demands on concentration or intellect. Almanacks – collections of poems and prose extracts with a calendar tipped in at the end – were the first books to be issued in these bindings, followed by gift-books (*étrennes*) and, from 1825, in imitation of an English fashion, keepsakes. Novels, illustrated books and "picturesque publications", school prizes and works of piety were later categories, but serious literature, apart from Molière and La Fontaine, is markedly absent from Mlle Malavieille's lists. In his "didactic poem", *La Reliure*, Mathurin–Marie Lesné recorded the chief Parisian publisher-binders of the early period:

> Fuel, Janet, Rosa savent mieux que personne
> Le grand art d'embellir une étrenne mignonne.

Boutigny, active from 1835, was considered "the first to bind keepsakes in the English style". Engel, a wartime love-child to a German woman by a French soldier, was the most famous mid-century edition binder.

In spite of their gaudy exteriors these publications were priced very cheaply ("Il lui faut être sardanapalesque sur des cartonnages de quarante centimes", Béraldi, the principal historian of nineteenth-century French binding, remarked sarcastically). Although some machinery was introduced from the 1830s, most processes had to be carried out by hand. Workshops were progressively replaced by factories, and costs were kept down by production-line methods, each employee being allotted one repetitive task. Female labour was widely used, particularly for folding and sewing. The cloth used in France was usually of a drab hue, but from the mid-1840s a new mode arose for "mosaic" bindings, also known as *cartonnages impériaux*. These were cloth cases to which small pieces of coloured paper were applied, the sides and spine being then blocked with large plaques in gilt. The vogue spread to England in the 1860s.

Cartonnages were despised by contemporary bibliophiles as "bazaar art" or "chocolate-box covers", and Béraldi wrote dismissively of book cloth: "la toile déshonore tout". It is somewhat ironical that both kinds of binding are keenly sought after by modern collectors. No doubt the difficulty of finding examples in fine condition of these fragile and ephemeral products adds zest to the chase.

Sophie Malavieille summarizes what information can be discovered about the designers of the plaques. What she has to say does not encourage one to take their artistic pretensions very seriously. Most publishers were uninterested in the choice of artist provided that the style and subject were right. "Faites faire par un bon artiste 6 ou 8 dessins piété de même genre", Martial Ardant frères instructed a correspondent. On another occasion they ordered fifty-five coloured vignettes to decorate the centre of board cases, "sujet fantaisie, paysages, marines, pour les volumes in-12". A few publishers were more discerning. Curmer commissioned a delightful *plaque orientale* for the 1838 edition of *Paul et Virginie*, and a charming Indian scene, sometimes impressed on velvet – thus reviving a technique practised in Jacobean England – was designed, though possibly by a binder rather than by the publisher, for the *Tableaux pittoresques de l'Inde* (the Abbey example, on the 1834 edition, precedes Mlle Malavieille's date for the earliest use of a specially engraved plaque). One would like to know more about Grandville's involvement with bindings: his drawings for the plaques which decorate *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1842), belong to the Bibliothèque Nationale, and it is very probable that he designed those used on the editions of Florian's *Fables* published by Dubochet with his illustrations.

The late Graham Pollard's annotated list, *Early Bookbinding Manuals*, continued by Esther Potter, includes not only manuals in the strict sense, but any book, and some manuscripts, throwing light on past binding techniques and procedures. Cassiodorus's *Institutiones*, the first entry, rates inclusion on the strength of two sentences. The first true printed manual was German, Zeidler's *Buchbinder-Philosophie* (Halle, 1708). England was more than a century behind with the anonymous *Whole Art of Bookbinding*, printed in Oswestry in 1811. The catalogue, with its informative notes, will be a valuable source for conservationist binders as well as for binding historians.

Scripts and their setting

Rosamond McKitterick

LEONARD E. BOYLE
Medieval Latin Palaeography: A bibliographical introduction
399pp. University of Toronto Press. £26 (paperback, £11).
0802056121

Central to the study of medieval Latin palaeography is the text the writing communicates. All knowledge that can be gained of the total context of any piece of writing, whether it be a superb Gospel book, an undated donation charter, a mathematical treatise or scribbled graffiti on a wall, serves ultimately to elucidate a text and its historical significance. For those who concentrate on a specific stage in the transmission of a text, it is salutary to be made aware that Latin palaeography should be integral palaeography; that is, it is not just a study of script types but one that combines all branches of research on the Middle Ages. No medievalist can afford to ignore, or fail to be equipped to cope with, the manuscript evidence and the context of its production and survival.

Leonard E. Boyle's admirable *Medieval Latin Palaeography: A bibliographical introduction*, containing 2,207 items, is designed to promote that integral ideal. Rather than a list of secondary work on handwriting, it is a comprehensive and imaginatively presented guide [illegible] text and problems throughout the Middle Ages. Deploying the word "setting" (scholarly, cultural, institutional, physical, human, textual and research) for the sections into which the bibliography is divided, Fr Boyle provides annotated lists, first of all, of bibliographies, manuals, collections of facsimiles and historical accounts of the discipline. The long guide to facsimiles is particularly to be applauded and is a constructive recognition of Mabillon's point: "Rectius docent specimina quam verba". In contrast to the usual emphasis on the early medieval period in palaeographical manuals, there is a good section on "Gothic" script from *c* 1150 to *c* 1450 in the pages devoted to script type and development. Some of the terminology here may be unfamiliar to students. Boyle chooses to describe early and late Roman cursive as "ancient" and "new" "common writing" respectively. He calls half-uncial, "semi-uncial"; makes no mention of square capitals; and does not distinguish between insular half-uncial and insular minuscule, using the unhelpful terms "Hiberno-insular" and "Anglo-insular" instead. Still less, in any of the discussions of script and its evolution, does he introduce the concepts of script systems, hierarchy of scripts and degrees of formality which have been used by palaeographers to clarify, for example, the writing of Antiquity, of the British Isles and – Boyle's own area – the period of "Gothic" script.

Further sections cover work on libraries and the book trade, both medieval and modern, [illegible] ment, scribes and scribal habits, abbreviations, punctuation and decoration. In line with the author's insistence on the importance of the text, there is an excellent set of references on textual transmission, problems of editing, identification of texts and fragments, with a guide to the methodological dispute on the editing of a text between Lachmann and Bédier and their respective followers. The seventh and final section comprises a list of manuals on language, types of text, chronology, topography, diplomatic and so on.

While, according to the author, the compilation is destined for beginners, all medievalists – and especially teachers of palaeography – will benefit from this bibliography. The commentary on the items is succinct and authoritative, the selection is most apposite. No bibliography of this kind can hope to be complete, as the author is at pains to emphasize. Nor can it remain for long up to date. It is unfortunate that this one starts with the handicap of having been completed in 1981 and that it omits, in addition, some important studies in all the areas delineated by Boyle which were published in 1980 and 1981. Nevertheless the book is an essential aid to learning and research, and a useful guide to acquisition for any library, whether individual or institutional.

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A recent addition to the Publishing Pathways series of book-trade history conference proceedings, edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, is *Maps and Prints: Aspects of the English booktrade* (124pp. Oxford Polytechnic Press. £6.75. 0 902692 33 X). The five articles deal with Samuel Pepys as a map collector, the aquatinter Robert Havell Jr, pre-1800 London guidebooks, the publications of the Ackermann firm and the printing of Thomas Be-